

Stakeholder's Meeting, 06/20/2023
Disability Nondiscrimination Plan; Public Participation Plan; Language Access Plan

Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 **Laurie Gharis:** So, we appreciate our interpreters tonight, in both Vietnamese and in Spanish.
2 This TCEQ stakeholder meeting is on the Disability Nondiscrimination Plan, the Public
3 Participation Plan, and the Language Access Plan. As noted, my name is Laurie Gharis, and I am
4 with the Office of Chief Clerk for TCEQ. Joining me today are Amy Browning, Renae DiGuardi,
5 and Astrid Duenas-Caldas.

6 We will begin with some logistics. The purpose of tonight's webinar is to provide you with
7 updates on our living plans as well as to get input from you. There will be a presentation, and
8 then a question-and-answer session. There will not be a formal session in today's webinar, but
9 we will be taking notes and recording so that we can consider all information provided in
10 making updates and implementing these plans.

11 Please note that this meeting is scheduled to end by 8 p.m.

12 For audio, you may select the phone call option to display the dial-in information, or you may
13 select the computer for computer audio. You have a mute button on your webinar. Please keep
14 yourself muted unless you are called upon to speak, we will answer questions after the
15 presentation.

16 If you have questions, you may raise your hand so that we know to call upon you at that time,
17 or you may type a question into the question-and-answer box at any time, and we will answer
18 those questions after the presentation is complete so that all questions can be interpreted. We
19 have the chat box disabled, so please type any written communication into the question-and-
20 answer box.

21 If you are joining the webinar via phone and need to mute or put your phone on speaker, you
22 can use both the mute and speaker buttons as shown in this slide.

23 As noted earlier, the presentation is being interpreted into Spanish and Vietnamese. To
24 participate in another language, click on the language icon and select the specific language. You
25 should mute original audio so that you do not also hear English.

26 For English assistance, please call Steve Hutchinson with TCEQ's Office of Chief Clerk at (512)
27 217-6061.

28 For Spanish or Vietnamese assistance, please raise your hand or type into the question-and-
29 answer box, and we will do our best to help you.

30 Now I would like to hand over the microphone to Amy Browning.

31 **Amy Browning:** Thank you, Laurie. One piece of technical information: you said the question-
32 and-answer, excuse me, that the chat box was disabled for attendees, and Laur(ie), you might
33 want to put your instructions in the Q & A box because the attendees are not able to see them
34 in the chat box. So, that's just one technical piece of information that we want to make sure
35 that we have cleared up.

36 Can everybody hear me? I know Laurie was a little muffled.

37 Okay. Thank you, everybody, so much, for coming out to our stakeholder meeting tonight.
38 We're going to talk about our Public Participation Plan, Disability Nondiscrimination Plan, and
39 Language Access Plan, and the many things that the agency has been doing over the last year
40 and a half or so to implement these plans. And then we'll have time to answer questions and
41 take feedback from people that are attending the meeting.

42 Again, my name is Amy Browning. Thank you very much for coming to this meeting tonight.

43 Next slide, please. Laurie.

44 I'm, again, Amy Browning, with the Office of Legal Services. We also have tonight with us some
45 other speakers: Renae DiGuardi with the Office of Compliance and Enforcement and Astrid

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 Duenas-Caldas with the Air Grants Division. You'll be hearing from them as well as from me.
2 And then, as Laurie said, Laurie Gharis, Jesús Bárcena, and Steve Hutchinson with the Office of
3 the Chief Clerk.

4 Next slide, please.

5 Okay, so our purpose tonight: our purpose tonight is to provide a brief background. I know
6 we've talked about the background for these plans a few different times, so I'm going to keep
7 that part relatively brief so we can spend time with the meat of tonight's presentation which is
8 the things that the agency has done and your opportunity to ask questions.

9 And so, discussion of our current plans: we'll talk about where to find them, what they include,
10 how you can provide feedback, and then the progress and changes that have been made.

11 Next slide, please.

12 So why are we here tonight? We're here tonight because of the Informal Resolution Agreement
13 that was signed by TCEQ and EPA in November of 2020 to resolve a Title VI complaint filed in
14 2019 that alleged discrimination on the basis of national origin. Without TCEQ admitting to any
15 fault in the matter, the TCEQ agreed to commitments to develop the plans that we're going to
16 discuss, to training and stakeholder engagement, much of which has already been done, but
17 which also would include tonight's webinar and previous webinars, previous in-person meetings
18 that we've done, and things along those lines, and then the implementation of those plans, and
19 what those plans actually mean for the agency.

20 Next slide, please.

21 So where do you find the plans? You can go to the agency website at this link right here. There
22 is a tab for each plan, and the plans themselves are available in English and in Spanish, as well
23 as a lot of other information about Title VI that's available on this particular page.

24 Next slide, please.

25 So, this is kind of what, this is what it looks like: just a screenshot of the top part of the page.
26 The page is kind of long, so it didn't all fit on one page, but you can see here's the English page.

27 Next slide, please.

28 And here's the same page in Spanish. And if you were to go to this link and page down, you
29 would see lots of other information. You would see information about the previous webinars,
30 that we've had, transcripts of other meetings, recordings of webinars, and so there's a variety of
31 different information there. And so, that's where you can find the basic information and a lot of
32 the information that I am going to be talking about this evening.

33 So okay, next slide, please. Laurie.

34 And I am really quickly going to see. Okay. Q & A. I'm sorry. There's just another little technical
35 glitch with trying to post the instructions so that our attendees can see them. Laurie, can you
36 post those in the Q & A, please?

37 **Laurie Gharis:** I am working on that now. It's taking a minute. But I'll get that posted over.

38 **Amy Browning:** Okay, thank you. So, the first of the three plans: the Disability
39 Nondiscrimination Plan. The Disability Nondiscrimination Plan formalized long-standing TCEQ
40 practices related to our internal policies for persons with disabilities to making sure that we
41 could provide accommodations and public participation opportunities for people that might
42 have disabilities.

43 It is assigned a nondiscrimination coordinator for the agency, provided for grievance
44 procedures, and provided specific instructions for requesting accommodations and things that
45 we have been sure to put in notices and other information available to the public, so they would

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 know how to request those accommodations when they were needed. And so, there's been
2 some of that. And so, that's a lot of stuff, like I said, that we were doing, that TCEQ has done
3 for many, many years, but this just puts it in a more formalized fashion.

4 Next slide, please.

5 The second of our three plans was the Public Participation Plan, and the Public Participation
6 Plan talks about some of the many opportunities for public participation that the agency offers.
7 It talks about some of the preliminary screening efforts that have to now go on for agency
8 activities so that we can make sure that we're meeting public participation requirements and
9 making sure that those public participation opportunities are available to everyone in our
10 communities. It includes a requirement for a Public Involvement Plan. I'm going to talk a little
11 bit more in detail about the Public Involvement Plan because we have made great strides in
12 putting those in place. And then it also talked about training and improvement in agency
13 activities to, again, make sure that we're making sure that opportunities are equal for all of our
14 communities.

15 Next slide, please.

16 The Public Involvement Plan, the P.I.P.: this is developed after that preliminary screening that I
17 talked about for permit applications. It's done in coordination with the applicant. It considers
18 demographic characteristics of communities where activities are proposed to happen and has
19 several required elements that talk about what exactly is going to be happening in the area, a
20 plain-language summary of the activity, a statement about the known community and
21 stakeholder groups, detailed information about the demographics of the area, location,
22 involved community groups, things like that, and contact information for finding new
23 information or more information, information about where notices are going to be provided,
24 and how you can find them.

25 The Public Involvement Plan is used for activities that require public notice that are likely to
26 have significant public interest in geographical areas of the state, including Austin, San Antonio
27 Dallas, West Texas, Fort Worth, the Texas Panhandle, Houston, and along the Texas-Mexico
28 border. And you know, for permitting actions, this gives permit applicants information about
29 the communities in which they're going to be operating, and for the agency, it provides us
30 information about the communities that our actions are going to affect.

31 Next slide, please.

32 So, we took a little bit, trying to make sure the Public Involvement Plans were right. We did an
33 initial rollout in November of 2022, and then we received several comments on the forms, and
34 so we updated them in February. They're currently required for permit applications in air,
35 waste, and water, including both water quality and water rights permits. It includes a
36 requirement for a plain language summary. For a lot of permit applicants, they are already
37 required to do a plain language summary by rule for the changes that we did to our chapter 39
38 Rules in 2021, but for other types of applications that don't fall under chapter 39, they may not
39 have that requirement. So, the Public Involvement Plan requires them to develop that plain
40 language summary. And then an evaluation of need for enhanced public outreach which can
41 include alternative language, but it's not limited to it. It's also looking at, again, like we said, the
42 demographics of your area, are you in an area where you might need to consider how you're
43 going to get information out to the public? What types of efforts are going to be necessary. That
44 kind of information.

45 Next slide, please.

46 We are still working on the Public Involvement Plan form for agency activities. This is in-
47 progress. We've been working through it, working through all the different permutations.
48 There's a lot of things that go on at the agency, so there's lots of things that have to be
49 considered. However, we have already been doing public involvement plans for various

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 activities at the agency, including several rulemaking projects and state implementation plan
2 projects. And again, this is an evaluation of our need for enhanced public outreach. Do you
3 need to be translating documents? Is a virtual webinar appropriate for the type of activities that
4 you're talking about, or would you be better served by an in-person meeting? Those kinds of
5 evaluations that you can do.

6 Next slide, please.

7 So that brings us to our third plan, the Language Access Plan. It is a framework to identify
8 individuals and communities that need language access and a description of our approach to
9 providing language assistance when it's needed. And the plan itself talks about different ways
10 that we can implement the plan to reach our goals to have equal access to all of our activities.

11 Next slide, please.

12 So, for the Language Access Plan, we're looking at limited-English-proficient communities. What
13 does that mean? Individuals or communities who do not speak English as their primary
14 language and who have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English, and we want
15 to make sure that individuals and communities that are LEP are still having equal access to the
16 agency's activities.

17 Next slide, please.

18 So, the Language Access Plan talks about vital documents. These are documents in paper or
19 electronic material that's critical to access TCEQ's programs, activities, and services. And what
20 makes something vital depends on the importance of the document, the importance of the
21 information in the document, and the importance of the program the document's talking about,
22 and the consequence to the LEP individual if that information is not provided.

23 Next slide, please.

24 The Language Access Plan talks about the resources the agency can use to meet the goals of the
25 Language Access Plan: interpreters and translators that can be staff or contractors. We're gonna
26 talk a little bit today about some of the progress that we've made in this particular arena about
27 partnering with other agencies and organizations, about using telephonic and electronic
28 services or devices when necessary in order to make sure that we are providing the information
29 to the LEP individuals and communities.

30 Next slide, please.

31 Alright! So that's the background. That's all the stuff that we have about the plans themselves,
32 and so now we're gonna talk about recent changes, some of the different things that we've been
33 doing. We have a new media website where we post permit application notices. There have been
34 changes made to the Commissioner's Integrated Database and to the Agenda captions, with the
35 Commissioner's Integrated Database being one of the primary places people can go to find out
36 information about pending permit applications. We're talking about implementations of
37 changes related to language access, new guidance documents that lead developed, a new rule
38 comment page, and a translated complaint form.

39 Next slide, please.

40 Okay. So pending permit applications. One of the things that we did as part of our
41 implementation of our alternative language rule changes that we did in Chapter 39 was we
42 developed this particular page for posting notices related to pending permit applications.

43 Next slide, please.

44 So, this is the index page. If you go to this link, you can see for permit applications that are
45 subject to chapter 39, notices and plain language summaries are going to be posted on these

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 pages for each of these areas. So, you have different pages for air, for several different waste
2 categories, and for water quality.

3 And next slide, please, Laurie.

4 And so, here's an example. So, this is the air page, and if you look at it, you can see that this
5 particular company there's a plain language summary. They were required to have English and
6 Spanish notices, so their plain language summaries also get translated into Spanish. Their first
7 notice, the NORI is available, and it's available in both English and Spanish, and whenever they
8 publish the NAPD, that one would also be available in English and Spanish, when they get to
9 that point. If you were to page down you would see a whole list of permit applications. And this
10 has been up since May 1st, 2022, so just over a year now for this page. And, again, this is the air
11 page, a brief snippet of it, but you have the same for air and for several waste categories.

12 Next slide, please.

13 I told you we have some new guidance documents, so we have new guidance documents related
14 to language access and public participation. And so, this is the title VI page. Remember I said
15 earlier that I just picked the top of it. So, this is the related TCEQ content tab on that page, and
16 the first two links under that tab are for guidance documents. This page, you can also get in
17 Spanish, and, again, same information.

18 So next slide, please. Laurie.

19 And so here are those two guidance documents, the one of them on public notice and one on
20 language access and public participation, and the new requirements in Section 39.4.26.

21 You can see these are the direct links for the guidance documents, and if you go to the next
22 slide, please, Laurie, you can see that we have those same documents provided in Spanish as
23 well. And so those are available for anyone that wants to look at them.

24 Next slide, please.

25 We also made some changes. So, this is the Commissioner's Integrated Database. This is where
26 you would go if you wanted more information about public notice on a particular permit
27 application. And so starting May 1st, if there are alternative language documents, they are going
28 to be posted with the English language document under the tabs in the database. And you can
29 see we provided that information right here at the top of the database, so we made it clear that
30 if you were looking for that, and you were looking for a Spanish language notice, you would be
31 able to find it.

32 Next slide, please.

33 The Agenda captions. So, Agendas are the meetings that the commissioners have about every
34 two weeks, approximately, and this is the list of the different items that the Commissioners are
35 going to talk about in their meetings. And so, again, for a little over a year now we have been
36 translating every item on that Agenda. So you can see this one here is for next week's Agenda,
37 June 28th, and the basic information is available here at the top, and if you were to keep going
38 down, you would see all the items are also translated.

39 Next slide, please.

40 Alright, I'm going to turn it over to Renae to talk about some of the things OCE has been doing.
41 Thank you.

42 **Renae DiGuardi:** Thank you, Amy. My name's Renae DiGuardi. I'm with the Office of
43 Compliance and Enforcement, and I'm excited because TCEQ has been working on updating the
44 complaint process to make it more accessible.

45 Next slide, please.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 So, if you wanted to be able to file a complaint, the best way to go about that is to head over to
2 our TCEQ page. We have updated the website today. And on that website, you're going to find
3 our 24-hour hotline number which you see down here, the 8-8-8, and then there will also be a
4 directory listed for our regional offices if you wanted to call and talk to someone in person. But
5 the part that I'm excited about is, if you head to our site today, you'll actually see our updated
6 form. So, our form is now available in both English and in Spanish.

7 Next slide, please.

8 So, when you head over there, you'll actually see an English link and a Spanish link, and those
9 links will take you to the form themselves. But you'll also see a QR code so that if you have
10 a phone and you use the camera function on your smartphone, it'll automatically pull up the
11 link that you'd like to go to either one, the English and the Spanish.

12 Next slide.

13 So, what's new with our complaint form? Well first, the biggest difference right now is that we
14 are offering it in English and in Spanish. Another great thing is that you can look at it either on
15 a computer, a tablet, and even on your phone. Once you submit this form, it will route directly
16 to the regional office based on the county where you are being affected. And if you open up this
17 form and you say, Oh, I opened up the English form, but I need the Spanish, or you open up the
18 Spanish, and you need the English, you don't have to get out of the form. Go ahead and click.
19 Up at the top where it says English and Spanish, it's a dropdown box, so all you have to do is
20 click on those words and you can transfer between either the English version of the Spanish
21 version so you don't have to go out and look for the next form.

22 Next slide.

23 So, we updated the complaint form to make it easy to navigate through, and what it does is it
24 kind of walks you through and helps provide you tools so that you can provide clear and
25 detailed information. We also have links that'll take you to the agency website to help you with
26 these tools. So, like if you weren't sure what type of complaints the TCEQ has the authority and
27 jurisdiction to investigate, we have a link that will take you to that site and give you that
28 additional information.

29 Another great link...

30 Go ahead and go to the next slide.

31 ...is the latitude and longitude link. If you're out and about and say that you have accessed our
32 complaint form, from your phone, but you're not really sure where you are, you can provide us
33 accurate latitude and longitude locations. And so the link in the form will take you to this
34 location mapper. And I did want to let you know that any of the links in the form, you're not
35 going to lose your spot. They open up in a new window. That way, you don't lose your spot in
36 the form as you're filling it out.

37 So go ahead and click, please.

38 When you click on that location mapper button in blue, it'll pull up this GIS map and right
39 underneath that little home symbol is a 'Use Your Current Location'. If you click on that, you'll
40 get a pop-up, and it'll say, "Allow us to use your current location?". That way, if you're standing
41 where you're being affected, it'll go ahead and map it for you and give you the exact
42 coordinates of the latitude and longitude of where you are.

43 Click, please.

44 So, if you click 'Allow', this is what it's going to show next. It'll drop a little symbol onto the
45 map to show you where you're located. And if you click on that symbol, it lists it out for you in
46 decimal and degrees.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

- 1 Next slide.
- 2 So, can you still remain anonymous if you're using our new form? Absolutely. So, as you're
3 filling out this information, if you would like to provide contact information, you can. Providing
4 us contact information helps us reach out to you. We'll be able to contact you with updates and
5 provide you a final copy of the form. You'll also receive the incident number so that you could
6 track the status of that complaint in WACI. If you prefer to remain anonymous, you can. We just
7 won't be able to follow up with you with any updates as to the investigation process.
- 8 Next slide.
- 9 When you've filled out this form completely, you're going to get a submittal confirmation, and
10 it will say, "Thank you for sending in your environmental report to the TCEQ". It will once again
11 reiterate, "if you have provided us with contact information, we will be reaching out to you."
- 12 We will, you know, give you a copy of the incident number, so you can track it in WACI as well
13 as updating you with the progress of that investigation.
- 14 Next slide, please.
- 15 And then I'm gonna go ahead and pass it back over to Amy to finish this off.
- 16 **Amy Browning:** Thank you, Renae. That was awesome. Yeah, we're really excited. This just
17 went live today and so we're really looking forward to seeing people starting to use it.
- 18 Okay, so another new thing: Now this has actually been available since about September. The
19 TCEQ has a new interface for commenting on rulemakings. So, this is for rulemaking and
20 similar type projects. The comment page, the pages you comment on, is available in both
21 English and in Spanish, and the new software also will give us the ability to translate response
22 to comments into Spanish if we get Spanish comments.
- 23 Next slide, please.
- 24 So, this is a snapshot again, for the current rule page. You can see there's a number of different
25 current projects that are posted. These are a variety of different SIP projects. So, I just picked
26 the first one.
- 27 Next slide, please, Laurie.
- 28 And so you can see this is the English page here, and if you go up to the top of the page, you'll
29 see there's a little radio button at the top and if you click that. it gives you a dropdown box and
30 it allows you to check Spanish. And if you were to check Spanish, you would get the mirror
31 page, which will also come up and has the same information available and would allow you to
32 submit your comments in Spanish if that would be your preference.
- 33 Next slide, please.
- 34 **Laurie Gharis:** Amy, just one moment. We have someone holding their hand up, and I just want
35 to make sure that they don't have a technical issue. So, I'm going to allow Deyadira Arellano to
36 speak.
- 37 **Deyadira Arellano:** I can wait for Q&A. I'm fine.
- 38 **Laurie Gharis:** Okay. That sounds good.
- 39 **Amy Browning:** Thank you. Okay, so again, new rule comment page that has also been
40 available. Again, this came about starting in with rule projects in September, so we've had it for
41 a few months, but not that long.
- 42 Next slide, please, Laurie.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 And then response to comments, you guys may know when we get comments submitted on
2 permit applications or comments submitted on rule packages, for those types of projects, we
3 provide formal responses, formal written responses to comments. For some permit applications
4 that we have received where we've received Spanish language comments, we have provided
5 Spanish language. RTCs, response to comments, RTCs. We haven't received any yet on rule
6 packages, but we do have the ability to do that moving forward.

7 Next slide, please.

8 And now I'm going to switch it over to Astrid so she can talk about what TERP has been doing.

9 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** Thank you, Amy. Good afternoon. My name is Astrid Duenas-Caldas,
10 and I'm the Coordinator for the Air Divisions here at TCEQ.

11 We are going to speak about the Texas Emission Reduction Plan, or TERP.

12 If you are all familiar with TERP, we were created in 2001, and the purpose of these programs
13 are to provide grants to reduce the nitrogen oxide emissions and there is a recursion for
14 deformation of ground level ozone for mobile sources.

15 We have some programs to encourage the use of alternative fuels for transportation in Texas,
16 to achieve reduction to emission from school bus diesel axels, and some studies and pilot
17 programs for authorities to encourage cargo movement that reduce emissions and also
18 implement new technologies to reduce emission from stationary sources and oil and gas
19 operations.

20 If you're not familiar with or want more information about this program, just please contact.

21 Just on regard of what we are doing in our division, since 2022, we hired a dedicated bilingual
22 staff as an outreach coordinator for the incredible division to manage all the TERP programs
23 and we've been translating all the documents and requests for grant applications.

24 Every program that we open has its own RFGAs, and we translate those. We have the mock
25 contracts. We start with the rebate program and it is not replacing the contract, but Spanish
26 speakers are able to read and understand what is in the contract and know what they are going
27 to sign with us.

28 The webinars, virtual presentations, all letters, since the person is applying through the end of
29 the contract, all letters are in Spanish and in English, to help them to again understand what is
30 in that letter. All the booklets containing the next steps after you applied for a grant. We have
31 documents, some materials to support people to understand or learn about our programs in its
32 own language. For now, we have only English and Spanish.

33 Then we have the all the workshops that we created in 2022 in English and in Spanish.

34 Then all the webinars since last year it's been, we offer the same webinar in English and in
35 Spanish to support our Spanish speakers to be able to understand, to know and to learn about
36 our programs, and to feel comfortable when they are applying.

37 Next slide, please.

38 Thank you. Then in our website, we have not only information in Spanish, but we add some
39 features and resources in Spanish. After the webinars, we include the presentation not only in
40 English, but in Spanish. That way, people can just like go back and just review what we present
41 during our webinars.

42 Starting this year, in addition to what we did the previous year, we created an internal Spanish
43 immersion group with the goal that our English speakers in our division learn some terms and
44 basic concepts and communication skills to be able to answer the phone or email back when
45 people are like writing in Spanish. That helps us to encourage people to feel comfortable

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1 communicating and make our Spanish speakers comfortable when they are just calling, because
2 we have people able to support and answer your questions.

3 Then our brochure. So, our banners, and all published materials now are accessible in English
4 and in Spanish.

5 And we implemented a new customer support phone system that's supported directly by
6 bilingual English-Spanish when you're calling. You don't have to be afraid that you don't know if
7 somebody is going to answer your call. You will be able to get support in your own language.

8 Thank you so much. That's it from our division.

9 **Amy Browning:** Thank you. Astrid. Thank you very much for presenting all that information.
10 That's great.

11 Okay? So just a little bit more. We have upcoming changes, or still more things coming. We are
12 going to be doing rulemaking to implement legislative changes, and we know that will involve
13 some permitting changes and public participation changes, so we're looking at stakeholder
14 processes moving forward. We have ongoing agency efforts to identify and translate
15 documents. We recently, just starting today, the agency has another Spanish interpreter that
16 has started at the agency.

17 Next slide, please, Laurie,

18 And so that will help as we continue moving forward and working on these different efforts to
19 implement the plans.

20 As always, you know, the plans are living documents. We're interested in input from our
21 stakeholders so that you can tell us if there's things that that we need to be thinking about are
22 looking at as we're moving forward to implement the plans. We do consider all the comments
23 as we're moving forward and as we continue to talk about these issues and to look at other
24 ways and other things that we need to do to be implementing our plans.

25 Next slide, please, Laurie.

26 So, you can always submit questions or comments to us at titlevi@tceq.texas.gov.

27 We also have our nondiscrimination coordinator in the Office of the Chief Clerk at
28 chiefclerk@tceq.texas.gov. And so, both of these email boxes are monitored, and we do respond
29 to the emails that we receive to that.

30 And with that, I believe that's the end of our presentation and we can move forward with
31 questions and answers. Thank you, Laurie.

32 **Laurie Gharis:** Thank you, Amy. That was a great presentation.

33 I see several questions coming in. I will go ahead and go through some of these questions, and
34 then go through anyone who has their hand raised.

35 So, I just want to first thank Amy, Renae and Astrid, and then those of you who have questions
36 go ahead and continue typing into the question-and-answer or raise your hand, and I'll try to
37 call upon you in order. And, I will go ahead and read and answer the questions out loud from
38 the question-and-answer box so that they can be interpreted.

39 And let's see.. I apologize. I had to use someone else's question to answer, so that I could make
40 sure I got that information out. I'm having a few technical difficulties, but I think we'll get
41 through it.

42 So, our first question was asking about putting a link in the chat, and I know we had quite a few
43 links in the presentation today, and I know that in the past webinars, we went ahead and saved

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 these presentations and put them on the Title VI webpage. Is this something we've planned to
2 do this time, too, Amy?

3 **Amy Browning:** I believe so, yes, the recording and the presentation.

4 **Laurie Gharis:** Great, and if anyone has any issues with accessing that, certainly you can email
5 or call us and we'll make sure that we can send you that information.

6 The next question just is actually a compliment, they said, thank you for translating the
7 complaint form. So, we are listening, and we are glad that we have that available now. And we
8 have some other compliments on that, too, about the changes being appreciated.

9 Let's see the next question., I'm gonna go back to Deyadira Arellano. If you would like to go
10 ahead and ask your question.

11 **Deyadira Arellano:** Hi there! Yes, I also want to second that. I am with Texas Environmental
12 Justice Advocacy Services, and we went a second, that gratitude for the translation on the
13 environmental report form. Back on May 5, 2023, we actually did not see that form available for
14 the Shell Deer Park fire, so if it's available now, we do appreciate that.

15 And also, we did want to address the I think it is...Give me a second, because I'm going through
16 my notes here...We did want to address the access plan G-1608, I'm getting an error message. I
17 don't know if other folks are also getting that error message, and what I wanted to add on that
18 was and I'm not sure if this can also be found somewhere else, but for language access, these
19 plans don't seem to address a need for standard reading level for informed consent. John
20 Hopkins Medical Internal Review Board recommends no higher than an eighth grade reading
21 level. So, do you know if any of these plans specifically state or address the need for standard
22 reading language?

23 **Amy Browning:** I don't off the top of my head. I don't believe so. I just tried... you said the
24 language access plan, correct? I just tried to access it, and it's not giving me an error message in
25 either English or Spanish.

26 **Deyadira Arellano:** Okay. The Spanish is working fine. It's TCEQ's language access plan GI-608.
27 I'm going to English, and I'm not seeing it. So, I just want to make sure it's not just me.

28 **Amy Browning:** Okay. Well, I just clicked on it, and it just popped up.

29 **Deyadira Arellano:** Okay. Well, someone that's not TCEQ, I guess.

30 **Amy Browning:** Yeah, so yeah, no. I get that.

31 **Deyadira Arellano:** Okay. Okay. Thank you.

32 **Amy Browning:** So, yes, and the complaint form, it went live today. So, yes, it wouldn't have
33 been available. The new complaint form went, live today with the translated complaint form.

34 And Laurie. I don't know if you can speak up, but we have couple of people that are having
35 trouble hearing.

36 **Laurie Gharis:** Okay. I'm hoping that that will be better. Is this a little louder? I'm going to turn
37 this up a little bit, too. Hopefully, that helps.

38 **Amy Browning:** It helps a little bit. Just by the way, if you are having trouble hearing Laurie,
39 you can turn on captions too.

40 **Laurie Gharis:** I apologize. I have my speakers and information, the audio, up so, and we've
41 tried to test this a couple of times, so I will speak louder and hopefully, that will help. Let's see,
42 Deidra, if you want to email us at either title VI or at the chief clerk's box, we can go ahead and
43 get you the language access, plan. It opened for me also, but it may be different since we're

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 TCEQ versus non- TCEQ. So, if you're having trouble, and you just want us to email you a copy,
2 we're happy to do that.

3 Next up, we'll take another person with their hand up. I'll just alternate between the question-
4 and-answer and the hands up.

5 So, next up I have Mark McGona.

6 **Mark McGona:** Hi! Can you hear me?

7 **Laurie Gharis:** Yes, we can.

8 **Mark McGona:** Oh, great! Thank you! My name is Mark Magagana. I'm the founding president
9 and CEO of Green Latinos, a nationwide network of Latino environmental conservation and
10 climate justice champions. I want to thank TCEQ for holding this hearing to make sure you're
11 compliant with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and that you're implementing your TCEQ
12 Language Access, Public Participation, and Disability Plan to provide equitable access to limited
13 English proficient populations.

14 Language is still too often a barrier to access and equity in our communities, and ensuring
15 access in every level and structure of government is an important component of our
16 community to be equitably considered and included in the decision-making process. And so, we
17 don't want Spanish or other languages to be a barrier to participation or document translation,
18 interpretation, availability, and outreach to these communities. So, my question is, is this TCEQ
19 Language Access Plan considering using technology, machine-based translation, or reliance on
20 bilingual TCEQ staff to provide interpretation rather than depending on qualified, trained
21 human-based, professional translations?

22 **Amy Browning:** We are using all of the resources that we have available to us, depending on
23 which resource is most appropriate for the different types of situations that we have. So, for a
24 professional webinar like this, where we are going to have professional interpretation services
25 that can provide the trained interpretation that's needed for an intensive sort of program like
26 this webinar. For, you know, someone that is answering the phone, we may be looking at
27 bilingual staff to help us. The agency has also hired interpreters as Astrid discussed. We have
28 actually a new person starting today. And there's a person in the Chief Clerk's office that are
29 professional and that is part of their job, to help us be able to meet those needs.

30 **Mark McGona:** Thank you for your consideration and increasing the numbers of available
31 interpretation. It can be very complicated, and especially if you get into simultaneous
32 interpretation demands for professional capabilities. So, thank you.

33 **Amy Browning:** Thank you.

34 **Laurie Gharis:** Let's see. Next up we have Stephen Wu.

35 Let me. I think I need to. Sorry about that, Stephen. Try again.

36 **Stephen Wu:** Oh, no worries! Can you hear me now? Okay, perfect. Thank you.

37 Echoing everyone in terms of appreciating the multilingual interpretation that's offered today
38 in, obviously, Spanish, Vietnamese and English. My question is the capability for these kind of
39 public engagement meetings to be interpreted in additional languages.

40 My colleague, she recently requested for Korean interpretation for this specific meeting, but got
41 a couple of responses from the agency, saying that y'all cannot accommodate for that kind of
42 request at this time, and because of that we sadly couldn't have many of our Korean-speaking
43 community members attend and fully participate in understanding these kind of updates with
44 TCEQ.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 So directly my question is, is it possible for additional interpretation of different languages be
2 requested?

3 **Amy Browning:** It is possible for different interpretation of other languages to be requested. It
4 requires time for the agency to be able to meet those types of accommodations, because, you
5 know, we have a need to reach out to professionals. We have certain processes within the
6 agency itself that take a certain amount of time to be able to meet those needs. We are working
7 on coming up with specific guidance for that that we can provide. So, that that is a need that we
8 have been made aware of and that we're working on.

9 **Stephen Wu:** Okay, those guidances are still being developed. Is that what I heard?

10 **Amy Browning:** Yes.

11 **Stephen Wu:** Okay. I guess in the future, either near or long term, what would be a
12 recommended amount of time to request for a different kind of language interpretation?

13 **Amy Browning:** Well, I think that we are still evaluating that. Some other guidance that we have
14 provided in our rules, so, for example, if you look at the changes that we made to our
15 alternative language rules in chapter 39, in section 39.4.26, one of the rules talks about
16 interpretation of public meetings, and it talks about having received comments at least two
17 weeks before the public meeting.

18 **Stephen Wu:** Right. Yes. We did see that part. Would it help if we also gave referrals or
19 recommendations of professional interpreters in these languages that our communities speak?

20 **Amy Browning:** All information is helpful.

21 **Stephen Wu:** Okay, perfect, because I know that when we were providing public testimony in
22 the Texas Legislature, we got connected to when professional entrepreneur based in Austin who
23 could speak Korean and responded pretty quickly when we requested for that.

24 **Laurie Gharis:** Yes, I have to echo Amy. The more time you can give us, it's very helpful. Just, I
25 would say, even if you're a little bit later, you can still ask, and we'll still consider whatever we
26 can consider, and if you can give us specifics, that's helpful to this. If it's a community that
27 you're helping support that's impacted, that's helpful. So, we're still...these are living
28 documents. We're listening and trying to make those changes to make them as useful as
29 possible.

30 **Stephen Wu:** Thank you. And we hope that my organization, we're called Woody Juntos, we can
31 work with y'all also to try and improve these plans, so that, as you said, all of our community
32 members can participate fully.

33 **Laurie Gharis:** Thank you.

34 Let's see, I think our next question and our next hand is Schiff.

35 I'm going to unmute you Schiff if you wanna go ahead.

36 **Schiff:** Hi! Hey, Amy! Hey, Laurie! Great to see you guys!

37 **Amy Browning:** Hi!

38 **Schiff:** First off, I do want to echo the statements that have been said. These translations of the
39 site are great. They are a really, really good step, and we're glad to see TCEQ doing that. You get
40 a lot of my ire, but this is good work.

41 I do have a few questions. So, I believe when Astrid was speaking, she mentioned the TERP
42 contracts, and I was wondering, are those contracts fully translated, or just the accompanying
43 documents?

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** As I mentioned, the contract is a mock contract, the regular, the real or
2 legal contract, is in English, but we created the mock contract to help people to understand
3 what is in the contract. What are the terms? What are they are going to include? And when they
4 sign the contract, they know what is included.

5 About other documents, when we ask for the disposition, or if other documents that we need
6 from the applicant or the grantee, the information is in English, but if we identify there is a
7 Spanish speaker, we make the arrangements to communicate with that person in it's primary
8 language and include some information in the letter or letters that we are a sending to that
9 person to ensure they have comprehension of each document and part of the process.

10 Also, as I mentioned, we have the dedicated bilingual phone online that they can call and we
11 will be able to answer all questions.

12 **Schiff:** Okay. So, just to make sure, though, that is to say, the actual contract...I understand
13 what you're saying as far as providing other documentation so that they can understand what
14 they're signing, but the actual contract itself is still only in English.

15 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** Yes.

16 **Schiff:** Okay. I also had a question about the purpose of the Spanish immersion group for AGD
17 staff. What is the purpose of the Spanish immersion group, exactly?

18 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** With the TERP program, we use specific terminology, and what we want
19 is for the staff member that is for our bilingual to be able to understand what the person is
20 calling and what is the information. When I'm just talking about, for example, TERP or the
21 rebate program or any of other programs we have like a specific terminology, and if the person
22 is asking, we want the staff to be able to understand and direct the call to the right person or to
23 support the grantee or the applicant when they are on the phone.

24 **Schiff:** Okay, thank you for that clarification. I appreciate it.

25 I just would like to flag with the positive steps TCEQ is taking with these plans that Department
26 of Justice Best Practices still stresses not relying on bilingual staff to provide that, rather,
27 having qualified interpretation and translation. So, appreciating, as Amy was saying, that these
28 are living plans and trying to provide the best kind of implementation possible, I would
29 strongly stress that while that might be important, it is ideal to not rely on bilingual staff to
30 communicate those technical terms. If they don't have a background as interpreters.

31 I just have...I have many questions, but in the interest of time, I will try to be as brief as
32 possible.

33 Amy, my question to you is in regard to Section 8 of the LEP for translation. It says that TCEQ
34 may determine to only translate the vital information contained in a document that contains
35 both vital and nonvital information. I remember the last time that we spoke, you said that that's
36 an implementation question and as we move forward, we can see how that goes.

37 I know that that was actually modeled off of DOJ LEP Guidelines. And so, the way the TCEQ
38 wrote it, it left out a vital section that DOJ has that states that if interpretation can't be
39 provided in that moment, that a translated written copy will be provided.

40 And so, I was wondering, has TCEQ addressed that concern from last year?

41 **Amy Browning:** I mean, it's still a concern. We're still looking at these. I'm not sure that that
42 specific issue has come up yet.

43 **Schiff:** Okay. And finally, this is gonna be my last question, for now at least.

44 In the Public Participation Plan, in Section 6, with permit applicants rules: this is a portion
45 where applicants are able to provide interpretation and translation.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 I was wondering, could TCEQ give any kind of, I guess, update in any oversight that the
2 Commission has provided, the agency provided, to applicants during these things to assure
3 accuracy of applicant provided interpretation and translation?

4 **Amy Browning:** So the rules require, our rules in chapter 39, that was one of the changes that
5 we made about making clear the responsibility of the applicants to provide interpretations at
6 meetings, and they have been doing that. I mean we've gone to lots of meetings that have
7 interpretation. Laurie goes to a lot more meetings than I do, so she might have a better feel for
8 that.

9 You know, we did provide some broad guidance I've shared, that I talked about earlier, about
10 the new chapter 39 requirements as well.

11 **Schiff:** Okay. Sorry.

12 **Laurie Gharis:** Okay, sorry, Schiff. I can jump in. I have been at several public meetings where
13 interpretation was provided, and they did hire qualified interpreters, and also from the Office
14 of Chief Clerk, we often bring our interpreter with us, so that we have someone there that can
15 register people in and listen and be there if some type of question comes up. So far, so good. I
16 would note that if there is someone in the audience that feels the interpretation is not qualified,
17 then they should put that in as a comment that, a formal comment, that this interpretation was
18 not adequate and why it wasn't adequate.

19 **Schiff:** Alright. Well, I appreciate that update guys. Thank you so much.

20 **Amy Browning:** Thank you.

21 Laurie, you're muted!

22 **Laurie Gharis:** Thank you. I am going to go back to some of my questions, and then we'll come
23 back to hands.

24 So, we have a question here. Will there be more uniform language translation of social media
25 advertisements, for example, on social media, the advertisements for this very stakeholder
26 meeting has primarily been in English only. On Facebook, was there a post in Vietnamese, and
27 no post in Spanish on the website, Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter. I will state, and Amy, I
28 know, shared some information, and I believe we had some posts that were interpreted, or
29 translated into Spanish to go out on social media. Amy may have more information.

30 **Amy Browning:** Yes, for this meeting there were, particularly for the original notice, I know the
31 Vietnamese translation of the information was too long for Twitter. So, we did look at that, and
32 so that's, you know, that's an implementation issue that we're working on.

33 But yes, we are working with our agency communication folks to try to get notices of meetings
34 like this out, and you know for lots of meetings that we've done, including this particular
35 meeting, and including other meetings that we have done over the last couple of years, we've
36 been providing notices at a minimum in both English and in Spanish.

37 **Laurie Gharis:** I would also like to note now that the External Relations Division has a full-time
38 interpreter, translator on staff that should be very helpful, also.

39 Our next question is...

40 Let's see. It's Yvette, and I know that Yvette had her hand raised also. Let me see if I can give
41 her the opportunity to speak.

42 For some reason it's not allowing me.

43 I'll go ahead and just speak her question right now.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 It says to report an environmental problem to TCEQ, this page is hosted on the TCEQ page, but
2 the translated form is on SurveyMonkey. Will all the complaints on SurveyMonkey be recorded
3 in a TCEQ database?

4 So, Renae is on. Well, let her answer that.

5 **Renae DiGuardi:** Hi, yes, thank you for your question. Just to let you know we are using
6 SurveyMonkey for both the English and Spanish complaints and the reason why a
7 SurveyMonkey is new technology that does offer multiple languages, so we can create the form
8 that's needed for people to easily access and report these complaints.

9 And what happens is once a complaint is submitted, an email is generated and sent to those
10 regional offices, and the people that need to retrieve that information have accounts, and they
11 can go into SurveyMonkey, which meets our security standards, and retrieve that information.
12 And what they do, those complaints are then put into CCEDS, and they generate a CCEDS
13 number that'll be associated to the investigation and tracked in WACI.

14 **Laurie Gharis:** Thank you, Renae.

15 **Amy Browning:** Renae. What's WACI for our audience?

16 **Renae DiGuardi:** Sorry. Let me actually pull it up because my mind just went blank when you
17 did it. It's our complaint tracking, so you can actually go onto our website and click on the link.
18 (Giggles) Apologies. Woo! And then what happens is you'll actually go in and put in your
19 incident number.

20 It's our Web Access to Complaint Information. That's what WACI stands for.

21 **Amy Browning:** Thank you.

22 **Laurie Gharis:** Amy, are you able to see the attendees with their hands up? I only can access
23 three attendees at the moment.

24 **Amy Browning:** Let's see.

25 **Laurie Gharis:** I believe Yvette had her hand raised and now I cannot get to her.

26 **Amy Browning:** I'm looking. Yes, I see, Yvette. Yvette, can you speak now?

27 **Laurie Gharis:** Would you allow her to speak? Yes, just click on her and allow her to speak?

28 **Amy Browning:** Give that you can unmute yourself. Yeah.

29 **Yvette Arellano:** Perfect. Thank you so much, Amy, and my name's Yvette Arellano. I am based
30 here in Houston, Texas, Executive director of fence line watch. We're an environmental justice
31 organization here in Houston.

32 And my question is...One, huge thanks to the TCEQ team for really working diligently on this
33 issue and trying to address the individual comments that we have submitted over the past
34 couple of years.

35 And my question is over...One, I have a request, and my request is that automated
36 interpretation and translation services work in tandem with professional in-person review.

37 And then my question is over the external outreach efforts. In the Access Plan, there's a
38 provision that says that individual divisions or offices of the TCEQ throughout the State will be
39 given a survey to fill out to understand whether or not there has been outreach from Spanish
40 speaking communities. Now, given that TCEQ hasn't had this very robust access to Spanish-
41 speaking and other non-dominant-English speaking communities, is there a plan to basically
42 create outreach in areas where there has historically been no outreach, limited language access,
43 using things like census data or school information to really identify where these communities
44 are?

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 **Amy Browning:** Yes, we are working on that, and, you know, I know I talked briefly about the
2 Public Involvement Plan forms and that we're in the process of developing those, but that is,
3 you know, that's one of the things that does. It's a tool to help us make those kinds of
4 evaluations as we move forward with agency projects.

5 **Yvette Arellano:** Thank you.

6 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** May I mention about our TERP programs? We are just trying to get the
7 right target population. We are like currently creating the workshops in the Spanish, but we are
8 going to different areas or trying to find the areas where the Hispanic population is located to
9 be able to spread the word or communicate our programs. This morning, for example, a couple
10 of weeks ago, we were in San Antonio, and we are going to be in Houston this weekend. But
11 when we were in San Antonio, we offer the workshops, but also we were invited for one radio
12 station in Spanish to be able to share the information about our programs and our workshops.

13 We are trying to find those new resources and contacts and network that we are able to deliver
14 the message to the Spanish speakers. That is our target right now.

15 **Laurie Gharis:** Thank you, Astrid. Let's see, I have several other questions in our question-and-
16 answer box.

17 Let's see, the next one is. I was wondering, do you know what are the number of languages
18 covered by the bilingual staff?

19 I don't think Amy and I, I don't know that we have that answer for over 2,600 staff.

20 **Amy Browning:** No, and I mean, as far as the interpreters that the agency has hired, that's
21 going to be Spanish.

22 **Laurie Gharis:** Correct. But I will note that Amy does lead a group that has people from each of
23 the offices, and it's helping us better understand where each office stands and what their needs
24 are and what they are they are able to do.

25 Our next question is so, who is the person to ask for accommodations because I have spoken
26 with the chief clerk in public interest, council, and have been denied assistance. Sorry if we are
27 not at the disability section yet, or if it has passed. So no, it's the appropriate time to ask that
28 type of question, and I am sorry if that has happened. As the chief clerk, we do take that very
29 seriously, those types of questions, and we do try to accommodate, if at all possible. We do
30 need some time, so I always ask that you reach out to us as quickly as possible, especially if it's
31 a service that maybe we don't have on hand right then. So I welcome you to reach out directly
32 to me if it's involving the chief clerk. My email is Laurie.Gharis@tceq.texas.gov. And if it's
33 something that's coming through, the chief clerk's office, I certainly would want to see it and
34 see what we can do. And Amy may have more to add.

35 **Amy Browning:** Well, I would just add that almost always, notices that go out about agency
36 actions, rule hearings, public meetings, meetings like the one we have tonight, they always have
37 a phone number and email contact to reach out to if you need accommodations. And, as Laurie
38 said, the more time you give us, the easier and the more likely we are to be able to make those
39 accommodations. But that information is...I don't know of any notices that we've been
40 providing that don't have that information in the notice that tell you who to contact in order to
41 get that accommodation.

42 **Laurie Gharis:** Our next question is under Section 5 of the Language Access Plan for the 4-
43 Factor Analysis, Factor 2 presumes the importance of frequency with which LAP individuals
44 encounter TCEQ programs, activities, or services. The need for an enhanced language services
45 will be based on the frequency of staff contacts with the language group, how often LEP
46 individuals seek TCEQ services, and the type of language services needed.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 While well intentioned, and in theory a logical method to determine language needs, this factor
2 does not take into account the number of language groups that will not be able to contact the
3 agency in the first place because of lack of language access on the website and phone lines for
4 staff contacts with different language groups outside of Spanish.

5 How often does this happen? And if they do, are the staff members proficient in that language?
6 Is there an interpreter? And we believe this factor as currently constructed skews actual
7 language needs.

8 **Amy Browning:** Well, you know we are a big agency, and we do a lot of things I couldn't tell you
9 off the, you know, I couldn't just tell you how often that occurs. I know it does occur, and I
10 know that when it does, we reach out and we find ways in order to communicate, and if we, you
11 know, there are a number of things that can happen. There's some contracts with some
12 telephone lines that provide interpretation services and some other things. But again, this is
13 one of those things that we're working on, and we're working on getting better as they happen.

14 **Laurie Gharis:** Amy, maybe also should we add something in about just because we haven't
15 been in contact with a group that speaks a different language? What happens if we know that
16 there's a school in the area?

17 **Amy Browning:** So, if it's an application that's subject to chapter 39, that meets the bilingual
18 trigger and it doesn't matter what the language is. The other one that we most often see is
19 Vietnamese, and we have had notices translated into Vietnamese. I believe that we had an
20 Italian interpreter at one public meeting because we received a comment in Italian.

21 So, we have been receiving other languages than Spanish, and responding to them.

22 **Laurie Gharis:** Thank you. Our next question is, how long will it take for the TCEQ to have their
23 websites in other languages, such as Vietnamese. There's only so much that community
24 organizations and social justice interpreters can do, especially when it comes to technical
25 terms.

26 **Amy Browning:** That's not something I have an answer for. You know it's one of those, again,
27 things that we're looking at. And that, you know, if there is an identified need for it, and that's
28 something that that we need to be addressing, then it helps when we get those types of
29 comments and information from people to say that that is a need that we should be looking at
30 and evaluating.

31 **Laurie Gharis:** And I think I would add too, because we do have a very large website and
32 everything cannot be done overnight, if you're seeing a specific form or a specific document or
33 specific area of the website that you think, wow, this could really help our community, it's good
34 to point out that if you can only start with one part, start with this. This would really help our
35 community.

36 The next question is that will all permit applications be translated, or will you only send out
37 translated permit hearing notices in the languages most common in the region?

38 I noticed the Corpus Christi area has been left out and maybe that falls under other.

39 **Amy Browning:** So, since May 1, 2022, if other public notices were provided in an alternative
40 language, and there is a public meeting that is held on a permit application, then the meeting
41 notice will be translated into the same language...since May 1st, and I don't know if we had any
42 meetings in that area since then, but you know...sorry. The application itself has to have been
43 administratively complete after May 1st of 2022. So, you know, make that clarification. And just
44 one thing on the previous question. I do want to point out that the agency's penalty policy was
45 recently translated, not just into Spanish, but also into Vietnamese. So, I just wanted to point
46 that out as well.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

1 **Laurie Gharis:** I'd also like to state that the Corpus Christi is noted as along the border in in our
2 plan, too, which then can help with the Public Involvement Plan.

3 **Amy Browning:** Yes.

4 **Laurie Gharis:** Our next question is so, what if the notices are required but not being given, as
5 in the case of a hazardous waste facility being constructed with no notice, no bilingual notice. I
6 have 41 emails alone asking for accommodations and hearing requests, and there's been no
7 tracking of complaints, and even have had my complaints changed as to the entity. I feel that
8 TCEQ has discriminated against me, blocked meaningful participation, and used my disability
9 as an excuse to ignore my complaints.

10 **Amy Browning:** That's, I mean, that is a specific complaint about a specific issue, and you need
11 to contact us with information about that specific issue. I don't...without information, I don't
12 know how to help you. I mean the rules are clear about what types of applications require
13 notice, so I don't know if the type of application you're talking about requires that kind of
14 notice. But if it does, that would be a requirement of the application and would be necessary to
15 be met in order for a permit to be granted. As far as translations, of complaints, again, the new
16 translated complaint form went live today. And if you have other issues with completion, you
17 need to contact your local regional office. So, if you're talking about Corpus Christi, you need to
18 contact the Corpus Christi Regional office and talk to them and tell them what your issues are
19 so that they can help you.

20 **Laurie Gharis:** And just on the permit side, our Commissioner's Integrated Database, whenever
21 any comments come in on a permit, those comments are available for everyone to see. So, even
22 if you submit it by mail, it's scanned and put into that system, so that you can see that your
23 comment has been received.

24 The next question is for Astrid. Can you share when and where the Houston meeting will be.
25 And Astrid, would you mind coming online, too, just in case our Vietnamese people or Spanish
26 people are not reading the question and answers?

27 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** Yes, I was just like kind of typing the information here in June 24th, we
28 are going to be in the Community Family Center that is located in 7524 Avenue E., Houston,
29 Texas 77012. We have two workshops: One at 9 am is "I just got a grant. Now, what?" in English
30 and in Spanish at the same time.

31 And then we have another workshop at 1045 to 1215 and is "Introduction to TERP Programs."
32 I'm just typing the information here in the question.

33 But again, it is Community Family Centers, 7524. Avenue E., Houston, Texas 77012, on June 24,
34 9 am for the first workshop, "I just got a grant. Now what?" and the second is a 1045,
35 "Introduction to TERP Programs." Both are going to be bilingual English and Spanish.

36 **Laurie Gharis:** Great, and Astrid are these also on the agency calendar, so, if someone were just
37 to Google TCEQ Agency calendar, would they be able to see these events?

38 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** I am not completely sure if it's in the agency calendar, but it is in our
39 TERPgrants.org website. And it's all the information, all the details about these workshops.
40 Again, it is TERPgrants.org. That is our website. And it's everything there also. Oh, I'm sorry,
41 Amy. And also, if you are registered in our email blast, you received the gold delivery notice last
42 week, and today, with all this information. If you want information about our programs, we
43 always encourage people to register in our email list to receive all the information while our doc
44 delivery notices.

45 **Amy Browning:** So, if you go to the TERP website and you click, there's a button that says
46 Explore Grants, and you click that. And there's an upcoming Events Button that you click, and if
47 you do that it shows the workshops that Astrid was just talking about.

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Speech disfluencies omitted.

- 1 **Laurie Gharis:** And just to confirm TERP is still TERP.
- 2 **Astrid Duenas-Caldas:** Yes, the website is terpprograms.org. Thank you for clarifying that Amy.
- 3 When I understood, was like kind of on the TCEQ, but not for our programs. But yes, all the
- 4 information related to our programs is on our website.
- 5 **Laurie Gharis:** Great. Thank you. So, our next question is, is American sign language
- 6 interpreting available?
- 7 **Amy Browning:** You can request you can make that request for that accommodation. I
- 8 understand that it has, that we have provided that accommodation in the past. I believe the
- 9 Chief Clerk's Office has, before, Laurie? But that's, again, you would have to make that specific
- 10 request for that accommodation.
- 11 **Laurie Gharis:** Yes, I have not seen it while I have been at the Chief Clerk's, but I have not had
- 12 that request, so definitely make that request if that's something you need.
- 13 Let's see. The next question is can TCEQ promote an alternative system to access translation,
- 14 equipment other than giving a state-issued ID?
- 15 **Amy Browning:** So, this is a concern. We understand. We've heard this concern before. It's one
- 16 of those things, when you go to public meetings, you have to have a way to track the necessary
- 17 equipment. And so we understand that concern. We'll continue to look at that concern and to
- 18 look at those issues.
- 19 **Laurie Gharis:** And we'd also like to note, too, that these are contracted interpreters that are
- 20 qualified, contracted interpreters, and it is their equipment. So, they are not state agencies, and
- 21 so they have their own processes that they follow. But I agree with the need.
- 22 **Amy Browning:** Yes, and nobody from the State sees those.
- 23 **Laurie Gharis:** Right. That goes right to the contracted interpretation group.
- 24 The next. These are, and I thank you for these questions. These are great questions, and we
- 25 appreciate you being with us and asking these questions and providing these comments.
- 26 So the next one is in Section 13 of the Public Participation Plan, it details the development of
- 27 the Public Involvement Plan and states, TCEQ's preliminary screening results will be used by
- 28 TCEQ divisions, in coordination with the applicant, to develop tailored public involvement
- 29 plans, a statutory or regulatory requirements for a specific activity would make a PIP
- 30 impractical. For example, a quick approval timeframe the TCEQ Program office should note in
- 31 writing such special circumstances. If TCEQ received such a notice from an applicant, what
- 32 happens to the Public Involvement Plan? Is the requirement waived?
- 33 **Amy Browning:** I'm not sure that is something that has come up. So, you know that we've been
- 34 asking applicants to fill out Public Involvement Plans since November, and so that's, you know,
- 35 that's an ongoing process. I'm not, again, I'm not really sure that that particular situation has
- 36 come up, and so that's something to think about.
- 37 But also, the point of the Public Involvement Plan, again, is to make sure that we're completing
- 38 appropriate outreach in those communities. And for many, not all permit applications that we
- 39 do, but for many of them, they are required also to meet statutory and regulatory obligations
- 40 that come from our statutes, and then are in our regulations in chapter 39, in chapter 55, and
- 41 as well as some other rule requirements in program-specific areas. But the chapter 39
- 42 requirements that apply do have specific requirements for alternative language. outreach.
- 43 **Laurie Gharis:** Let's see, our next question is, what accommodations are available for those with
- 44 communication issues, such as autism or other neurological issues, who need assistance in
- 45 presenting cases before the Commission? What can be provided?

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- 1 **Amy Browning:** I think that would be a case specific kind of issue. For cases presented before
2 the Commission at, for example, an agenda meeting, you would need to reach out to the Chief
3 Clerk's Office so that they could coordinate that.
- 4 **Laurie Gharis:** Yes, I would say, reach out as early as you can, and let us know what you're
5 hoping to get, and we can do our best to provide that, or maybe provide alternatives. But we
6 don't know unless you tell us, and if you give us as much time as you can that allows us more
7 time to go back and forth to try to get the best solution possible.
- 8 The next question is, will we be able to get the transcript to this meeting?
- 9 **Amy Browning:** I believe that will be having this meeting transcribed. The recording will be also
10 available, as we've post recordings for similar previous meetings.
- 11 **Laurie Gharis:** And that's on the Title VI web page.
- 12 **Amy Browning:** That's on the Title VI web page, yes.
- 13 **Laurie Gharis:** Great, so I think we have made it through all of the questions thus far. I cannot
14 see if there's anyone else with their hand raised, or Amy, are you able to see anything?
- 15 **Amy Browning:** Yvette still has her hand raised. Yvette, did you have another question? No, her
16 hand has gone down. I don't see any other hands raised.
- 17 Yvette, did you have a question?
- 18 **Yvette Arellano:** No.
- 19 **Laurie Gharis:** Okay. So, we'll give it just a few more seconds to see if anybody else has a
20 question. Raise your hand or type it in the question-and-answer box.
- 21 We're here definitely want to answer any questions that people may have. As we do that, I'm
22 making sure I mark off all of the questions to make sure that I've gotten everything.
- 23 Okay, I'm going to go ahead and allow Hy-Nez.
- 24 **Inez:** I'm Inez.
- 25 **Laurie Gharis:** I'm sorry. Inez. Please go ahead and speak.
- 26 **Inez:** Hi, so, yeah, so I caught Laurie. You're with the Chief Clerk's Office.
- 27 **Laurie Gharis:** Correct.
- 28 **Inez:** Correct. Okay. Who are you with Amy?
- 29 **Amy Browning:** I'm with the Environmental Law Division in the Office of Legal Services.
- 30 **Inez:** Okay. Awesome. Very good. I think that's all I have. I just wanted to clear that up. And so I
31 plan on reaching out to you guys. So, I just wanted to find where you where you're at with the
32 TCEQ and all that. So, thank you. Thank you for having us.
- 33 **Laurie Gharis:** Great. Thank you. Let's see. So, I've gotten through all of the questions.
34 Amy, did you see any more questions or hands raised? I don't think I see any.
- 35 **Amy Browning:** No, I don't see anything new.
- 36 **Laurie Gharis:** Well, I don't want to keep people if we have no further questions, but I did want
37 to note if you have questions after this meeting, this is not your only chance. As Amy provided
38 the Title VI email address, Amy, do you want to spell that out one more time, just in case
39 people need that.
- 40 **Amy Browning:** TitleVI@tceq.texas.gov.

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- 1 **Laurie Gharis:** Great. So, if you have questions, even after this meeting, feel free to either email
2 us or give us a call. The Office of Chief Clark can be reached at (512) 239-3300. And I just want
3 to thank everyone for being with us tonight, for providing your valuable comments and
4 questions and thoughts, and as I noted, although there was not a formal session during
5 tonight's webinar, we took notes. We're recording this meeting so that we can consider this
6 information when we provide updates to these living plans as well as as we further, with
7 implementation of the plans. But I think tonight's Webinar show that we're listening. We're in
8 trying to implement as many of these ideas as possible.
- 9 So, now that we've answered questions, this meeting is finished, and feel free to reach out to us
10 if you need anything further. I just want to thank you and have a great night.
- 11 **Amy Browning:** Yes, thank you. Thank you for attending the meeting. We appreciate it.