



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## Language Proficiency Assessment: Hiring & credentialing bilingual staff in high-need languages

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## I. Overview

Hiring professionals with language proficiency and skills in high-need languages (i.e. Spanish, HMoob) is an important consideration of Extension's mission to serve all state residents through our programs and services. In June 2023, the Dean's Leadership Team approved the process for assessing, titling, and compensating bilingual employees whose professional assets in these high-need languages contribute to their work.

The following document provides guidance to supervisors and hiring authorities. It outlines the process for assessing the language proficiency of 1) bilingual applicants for positions listed as bilingual skills "required" or "preferred" (Spanish or HMoob) and 2) current employees who use bilingual skills (Spanish or HMoob) as a part of their positions.

## II. Rationale

### **Why are Spanish and HMoob considered high-need languages?**

Spanish and HMoob are considered “high need” languages due to the number of WI residents who speak each language and their geographic distribution across the state. Spanish and HMoob are the second and third most spoken languages in the state after English. Additionally, speakers of these language are the most [geographically distributed](#) relative to other groups of languages spoken in Wisconsin.

### **What does it mean to hire a position where bilingual is a *required* skill?**

Bilingual as a required skill refers to language competencies that are essential to the position’s assigned responsibilities, duties, and tasks. Postings should be listed as bilingual when the position demands a professional level of language proficiency to successfully execute its scope of work on an ongoing basis (e.g. daily, weekly, etc.). Hiring a bilingual educator to provide public-direct programming in English and Spanish or HMoob is perhaps the most common example of position requiring bilingual skills.

### **What does it mean to hire a position where bilingual is a *preferred* skill?**

Bilingual as a preferred skill means that bilingual proficiency (speaking, writing, etc.) is not an essential part of the position’s day-to-day responsibilities, duties, and tasks. However, it recognizes a professional’s communication assets as a source of support to help advance our educational and administrative priorities in targeted areas.

### **What are examples of how professionals with “preferred bilingual” skills can help support our educational and administrative priorities?**

Supporting educational and administrative priorities can also include:

- Serving as Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) designate on search and screen committees
- Serving as a designated point of program contact and information for community members whose preferred language is Spanish or HMoob
- Supporting expanding access efforts driven by teams, task forces, and work groups within Institutes and the Division
- Assisting with the development and editing of public-facing communication that serve Spanish-speaking and HMoob-speaking populations
- Supporting or developing plans that help better manage existing multilingual communications that support Institute priorities
- Providing assistance on long-term projects (e.g. multilingual curriculum) that is being developed by Division of Extension faculty and staff

### **What is the Language Proficiency Assessment (LPA) and how does it evaluate an applicant’s level of proficiency in the target language (i.e. Spanish or HMoob)?**

The LPA is a process that is integrated as a part of the interviewing process. It provides a standardized process to assess an applicant’s ability and skills in the target language (e.g. written and oral communication). Hiring authorities help identify the position’s communication needs in the target language. As a part of the candidate interview process, assessment measures in the target language may include an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), providing a sample piece of written communication in the target language, or a formal observation of programming delivered in the target language.

### III. Key terms

**Language Proficiency Assessment (LPA):** Formalized process that evaluates the level of language proficiency (ie. applied language skills and competencies) of a job candidate or new employee (*see below for types of assessment methods*). The LPA is adapted from standards and tools developed by the American Council on Teachers of Foreign Languages.

**LPA designate:** A qualified bilingual employee who has completed orientation and training provided by Office of Access, Inclusion, and Compliance.

**Summative determination:** An official written assessment of the candidate's/employee's level of language proficiency using a standardized rubric. LPA designate submits the determination to the appropriate authority (ie. supervisor, hiring authority, S&S chair). Included in the summative determination is a recommendation (or not) for bilingual title designation and pay adjustment.

#### **Types of Language Proficiency Assessment methods:**

- Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI): A portion of the interview questions are conducted in the target language by the LPA designate. The OPI is typically conducted during the first or second round of candidate interviews.
- Written language assessment: Candidates are expected to produce a writing sample in the target language (e.g. respond to a prompt, develop a piece of strategic communication, etc.). The writing sample is evaluated by the LPA designate. This assessment would typically take place after the first round of interviews (i.e. finalist stage).
- Program observation (*only applies to current employees*): An assessment method where the LPA designate schedules a time to observe the employee's programming in the target language. Program observations can be conducted during in-person programs or virtual programs.

**Acceptable level of language proficiency:** Candidate or employee possesses, at a minimum, an intermediate level of language proficiency in each type of assessment used (i.e. oral, written, observation). NOTE: standardized proficiency levels include novice, intermediate, advanced, superior (see rubric below).

## IV. Corresponding roles and authorities

### Office of Access, Inclusion, and Compliance (OAIC)

Requests for Language Proficiency Assessments are submitted through OAIC's intake process: [OAIC Support Request Form](#). OAIC staff conducts Extension's Language Proficiency Assessments. In some cases, Institutes or Program areas may already have an appointed designate who is trained on providing LPAs (e.g. FoodWise). Following a Language Proficiency Assessment, OAIC staff (or designate) notifies the supervisor/hiring authority of the LPA results. This official notification provided to the supervisor/hiring authority is known as the "Summative Determination." This document explains whether the new hire/current employee has successfully met or exceeded the minimum proficiency level for the bilingual pre-fix (see Appendix to see a sample of the Summative Determination form).

### Supervisors/Hiring authorities

Supervisors and hiring authorities are responsible for keeping record of LPA requests of their employees. Supervisors are also responsible for submitting requests to OAIC for support with a Language Proficiency Assessment (applies to both new hires and current employees). The supervisor/hiring authority is responsible for providing HR with the official notification for an employee's titling and compensation adjustment.

*NOTE: For new hires, supervisors/hiring authorities must submit a request to OAIC prior to posting a job. This will allow OAIC to discuss the LPA process with the supervisor/hiring authority. This is necessary to ensure that OAIC has enough time to coordinate the appropriate level of support during the search and screen process.*

### Division of Extension Human Resources

Once the supervisor/hiring authority receives a Summative Determination from the LPA designated, they are responsible for informing Extension's HR who will then make any necessary titling and compensation adjustments. The employee will receive a letter that confirms the adjustment to their title and compensation. The supervisors are copied on this letter.

## V. Titling and compensation considerations

Upon the successful completion of a Language Proficiency Assessment, a "bilingual" pre-fix will be added to the employee's official title. The bilingual pre-fix is accompanied by a \$3500.00 pay increase applied to the employee's annual salary.

## VI. New hires

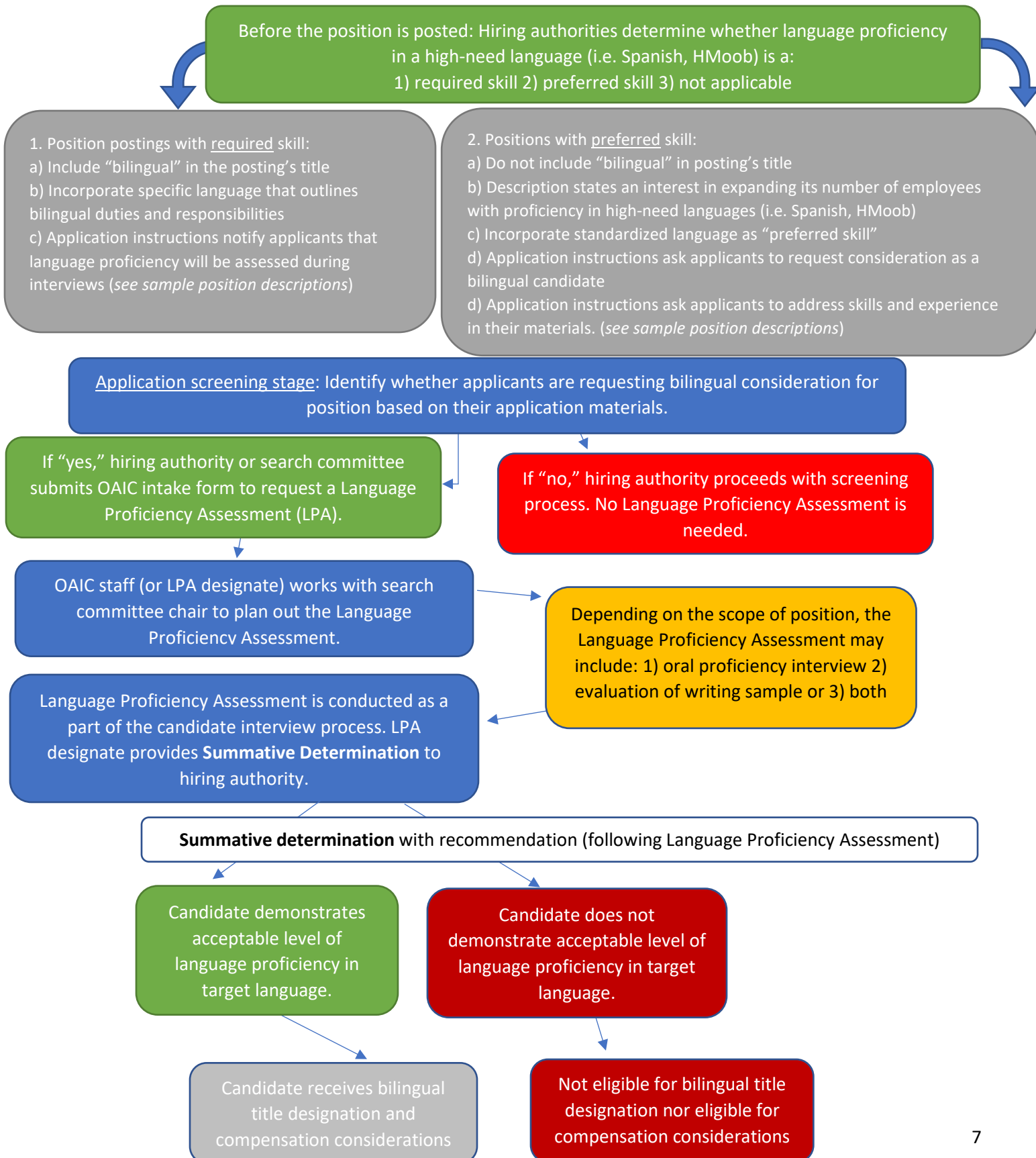
The following section outlines the process for utilizing the Language Proficiency Assessment during position searches. This only applies to positions that will be advertised as bilingual ("required" or "preferred" skills)

### Process for new hires (see next page)

- I. Prior to posting position, hiring managers submit an OAIC Support Request via [OAIC website](#).
- II. OAIC schedules a meeting with hiring manager to discuss position and timeline
  - a. OAIC offers guidance on listing the position as bilingual "required" or "preferred"
- III. OAIC works with hiring manager to coordinate LPA as a part of the interview process
- IV. OAIC conducts LPA of applicant(s) and completes Summative Determination form (see appendix)
- V. OAIC communicates the LPA to hiring manager
- VI. Hiring manager shares Summative Determination with Human Resources to make appropriate title and salary adjustments at the time of hire

## LPA Process: Workflow for new hires

### Bilingual v. Non-bilingual Position Postings



## VII. Current employees with bilingual proficiency

In some cases, employees who currently use bilingual (Spanish or HMoob) language skills may not have been hired into a position that was listed as bilingual. This section describes the process for employees who wish to have their language proficiency assessed for the purposes of titling and compensation adjustments.

Current employees are who are interested in pursuing the bilingual pre-fix and compensation adjustments are expected to work closely with their supervisors.

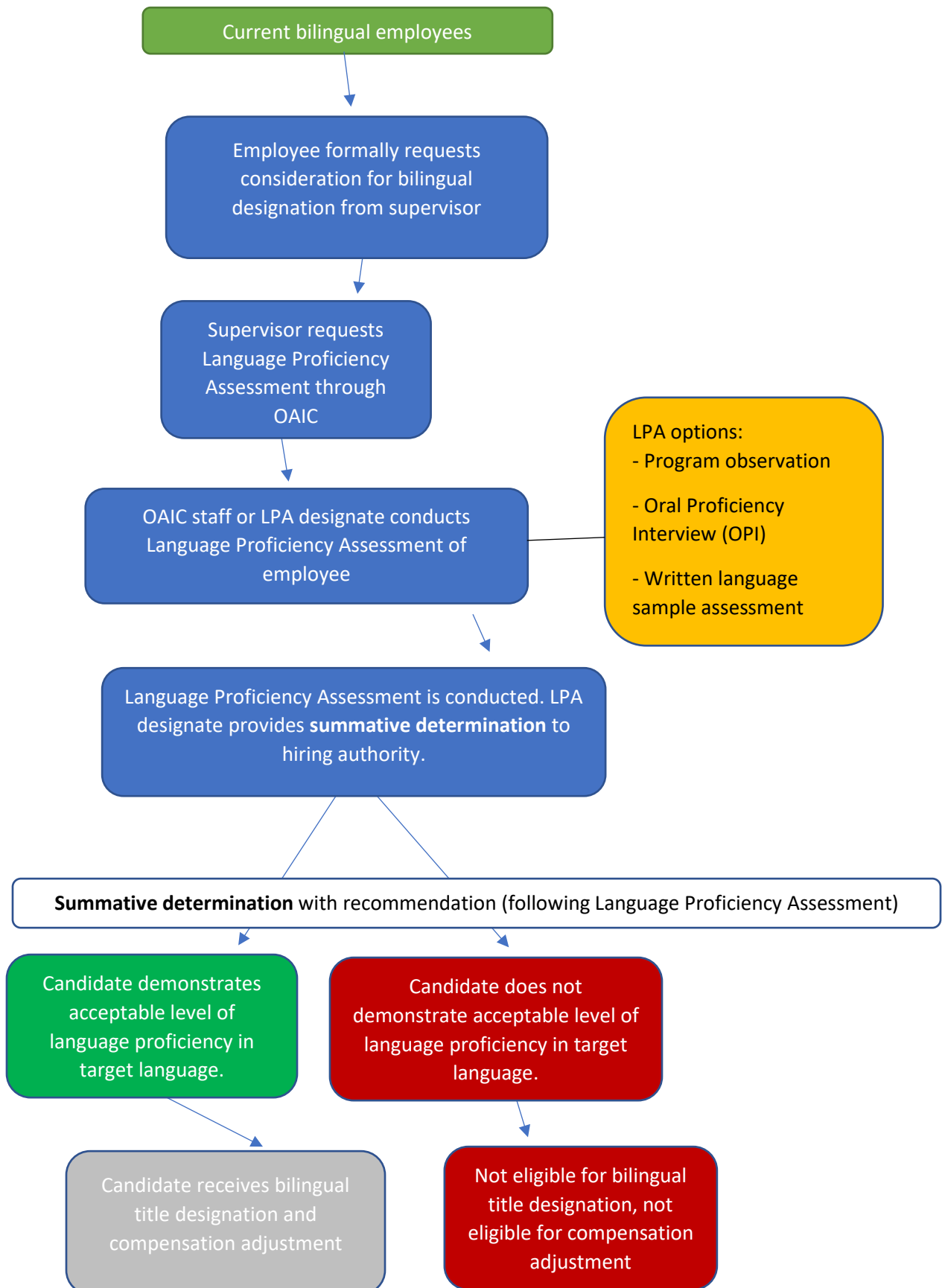
### **Eligibility for current bilingual employees (Spanish or HMoob)**

- The employee must have a minimum of 12 months of service with the Division of Extension. Months of service as a UW employee prior to joining the Division of Extension will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The employee must be able to demonstrate existing efforts of programming work in the target language (Spanish or HMoob)

### **Process for current bilingual employees (Spanish or HMoob)**

- I. The employee notifies their supervisor of their interest in pursuing the bilingual title and compensation adjustments. The staff member and supervisor will work together to identify job functions and responsibilities that are currently being achieved by using their proficiency and skills in one of the high need languages.
- II. Supervisor meets with employee to discuss how the employee's specific duties, responsibilities, and scope of position enhance Extension's public reach, public service, and educational outreach. The discussion should focus on defined educational needs as it relates to the employee's scope of work.
  - a. If there are questions about whether the employee's scope of work is eligible for bilingual title and compensation adjustments, the supervisor may contact Extension's Chief Diversity Officer and HR Director. The CDO and HR Director will assist in clarifying whether the employee's request is in alignment with what can be expected of a staff bilingual staff member (for more information, please see Appendix C. Bilingual Staff Scope of Position Document)
  - b. Both the employee and supervisor are responsible for keeping record of their requests for a Language Proficiency Assessment
- III. If the supervisor supports the employee's request for bilingual title designation, the supervisor will submit a request for a language proficiency assessment (LPA) through the OAIC intake form.
- IV. Supervisor meets with OAIC to discuss LPA for the employee and assessment method (e.g. program observation)
  - a. With support from supervisor, OAIC coordinates with staff member to schedule a program observation
- V. OAIC conducts the LPA for the employee and completes the Summative Determination form (see appendix)
- VI. Upon completion of the LPA, the supervisor will be notified of the outcomes of that assessment. If successful, the corresponding HR title and subsequent pay adjustment will be processed. If unsuccessful, OAIC, along with the supervisor will have a conversation with the staff member (if desired).

## LPA Process: Workflow for current employees with bilingual proficiency



## Appendix

## Appendix A. Evaluation Rubric that guides Language Proficiency Assessment

**Rubric for assessing language proficiency level** (adapted from [ACTFL 2012](#))

Proficiency level	Global Tasks and Functions	Context/Content	Accuracy	Text Type
<b>Superior</b>	Discuss topics extensively, support opinions, and hypothesize. Deal with a linguistically unfamiliar situation.	Most formal and informal settings. <i>Wide range of general interest topics and some special fields of interest and expertise.</i>	No pattern of errors in basic structures. Errors virtually never interfere with communication or distract the native speaker from the message.	Extended discourse
<b>Advanced</b>	Narrate and describe in major time frames and deal effectively with an unanticipated complication.	Most informal and some formal settings. <i>Topics of personal and general interest.</i>	Understood without difficulty by speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.	Paragraphs
<b>Intermediate</b>	Create with language, initiate, maintain, and bring to a close simple conversations by asking and responding to simple questions.	Some informal settings and a limited number of transactional situations. <i>Predictable, familiar topics related to daily activities.</i>	Understood, with some repetition, by speakers accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.	Discrete sentences
<b>Novice</b>	Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases.	Most common informal settings. <i>Most common aspects of daily life.</i>	May be difficult to understand, even for speakers accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.	Individual words and phrases

## Appendix B. Summative Determination Form (template)

Language Proficiency Assessment  
Office of Access, Inclusion, and Compliance  
Division of Extension

**Position (Title & Job No.):**

**Bilingual skills as listed in job listing:** \_\_\_\_ Required \_\_\_\_ Preferred

**Candidate:**

**Assessment date:**

**Assessment provided by:**

**Type of assessment:** \_\_\_\_ Oral Proficiency Interview \_\_\_\_ Writing assessment \_\_\_\_ Program observation

**Overview:**

**Oral Proficiency Interview:**

**Writing assessment:**

**Program observation (if applicable):**

**General observations:**

**Summative determination:**

\_\_\_\_ Approved (Candidate meets or exceeds level of language proficiency appropriate for the position)

\_\_\_\_ Not approved (Candidate does not meet level of language proficiency appropriate for the position)

## Appendix C. Bilingual Staff Scope of Position

### Creating and utilizing multilingual content: Guidance for bilingual staff positions

The following document is intended to help clarify the scope of role that bilingual staff play in developing content in target languages (ie. Spanish & HMoob). In general, creating content in your target language should directly relate to your position's scope of duties and responsibilities.

#### Self-directed efforts

As a bilingual staff person, you are authorized to ...

- Develop bilingual content for outreach purposes, such as:
  - Flyers
  - Press releases
  - Letters to families
  - Registration forms
  - Social media posts
  - Videos
- Create PowerPoint slides and content in your target languages for program delivery
- Deliver your educational programming in your target languages
- “Localize” existing content in the target language in a way that supports accessibility of materials
  - For example, altering a term or verb on a document because it facilitates participants’ improved accessibility and understanding of the content
- Serve as a public point of program contact for non-English dominant (i.e. LEP) participants
  - NOTE: If you have concerns about whether it is appropriate for your role to provide this type of support, please consult your supervisor or contact Extension’s Chief Diversity Officer ([dominic.ledesma@wisc.edu](mailto:dominic.ledesma@wisc.edu))

#### Supported efforts

In consultation with Area or program leadership, bilingual staff should consult OAIC for any needs concerning the...

- Translation of critical/vital documents (e.g. permission slips, health release forms, waivers, etc.)
- Translation of entire program curricula
- Translating handbooks
- Translating website content
- Creating reusable, multilingual templates for registration forms
- Interpretation services to aid program delivery

#### As a bilingual staff person, you are never expected to...

- Act as a translator or an interpreter in a manner that falls outside the scope of your role. This may include requests to:
  - Translate PowerPoint slides for other project collaborators, speakers, presenters, etc.
  - Translate content for fellow Extension colleagues (please direct them to OAIC)
  - Interpret during programming for fellow colleagues (please direct them to OAIC)

#### These documents already exist in multilingual format and are linked to the [OAIC website](#)

- Non-discrimination statements (ie. EEO/AA statements)
- Demographic forms (Spanish, HMoob, ...)
- Video/image/testimonial consent forms

**The Language Access Team is here to support your work.**

OAIC staff members are trained language professionals. Our specialization focuses on the strategic and coordinated use of multilingual communication in all forms. We welcome consultations from bilingual staff around any aspects of your program content development and delivery.

**Do you have a question or concern regarding an existing translation?**

- Contact our Language Access Team at [oaic@extension.wisc.edu](mailto:oaic@extension.wisc.edu)
- Please attach a copy of the document(s)