

THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF FILM, THEATRE AND BROADCASTING

I. Agency Mission and Background

Mission Statement

As the first film commission in the country, the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting (MOFTB) is the one-stop shop for all production needs in New York City, including free permits, free public locations and free police assistance. The agency markets NYC as a prime location, provides premiere customer service to production companies and facilitates production throughout the five boroughs. Whether production companies are shooting a feature film, a commercial, a television show or a music video, the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting serves as an invaluable resource to the New York City entertainment production industry.

History

In the 1960's, producers often required upwards of 50 permits to shoot in the City, and gaining access to some of New York's hottest locations was tricky, at best. Producers were required to obtain a permit for every single day of production. The Department of Commerce and Industrial Development issued permits for shooting, but producers were also required to receive approval from the Police Department, Highways Department and Traffic Department. If wires and cables were used, the permission of the Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity was needed, and if parks property were being used, additional permits were required. All of this aggravation caused many filmmakers to take their production to the West Coast.

In 1966, Mayor Lindsay gave the Department of Commerce the authority to issue a single permit for shooting in City-owned locations and abolished the power of City officials to censor the content of films shot on public property, as long as they didn't pose a risk to the public or break the law. He appointed an aide to help the film industry negotiate for shooting at privately owned sites and established a police unit to control crowds during filming.

In an open letter to the public, the Mayor explained the reasons for encouraging New York-based production. "Each additional feature film or commercial television show means additional jobs for New York residents," he wrote. "Additional jobs means a healthier economy. And a healthier economy means a healthier city."

The results were immediate and enormous. In 1966 alone, production in New

York increased by 100 percent over the previous year, bringing an estimated additional \$20 million to the City. It was the “overall climate of cooperation” that Mayor Lindsay created that sparked the industry.

“For the first time, our parks and museums, our streets and courthouses, our libraries and monuments, all these things that make New York unique, have been made available to film people,” he wrote.

When the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting was established, New York became the first city in the world to offer free, one-stop permits and expedite requests from production companies seeking to use public locations. The MOFTB continues to market New York City as a prime location. The agency also facilitates local production, provides premiere location services and liaises with business decision makers to grow New York's media industry. The MOFTB works closely with the Movie/TV Unit of the New York Police Department, a special team of officers who monitor scenes involving special stunts or uniformed officers, ensure pedestrian safety and reroute traffic.

New York City has grown to become one of the world's largest production centers, serving as host to film, television, commercial, musical and theatrical productions. Today, New York City's production industry generates over \$5 billion annually and employs over 100,000 people.

The MOFTB currently operates with a staff of 26 employees.

Direct Services

Free Online Permits & Easy Access to Locations

The permit MOFTB issues to a production is free of charge, and provides access to public locations and street parking for essential production vehicles throughout 300 square miles of public settings in the city's five boroughs, including 27,000 acres of city parks.

When a project is shooting at an exterior location which requires traffic control, or has a scene with prop firearms, weapons or actors in police uniforms, the production must request that the NYPD Movie and TV Unit be assigned to the location. The police unit will assign its officers at no charge to the production.

All decisions about what is permitted are made by the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting, working in close consultation with the NYPD Movie & TV Unit, and other key city agencies.

Filming in city parks, interiors of city buildings, bridges, subways or tunnels will require additional permissions from the controlling entities.

1697 Broadway - Walk In Center

Production companies may access permit application forms through the MOFTB website, www.nyc.gov/film, or by visiting the MOFTB office at 1697 Broadway, 6th Floor. Completed applications are to be submitted in person at the MOFTB office. This is the only location for the agency.

Permits are processed Monday – Thursday between 9am – 4pm and Friday 9am-3pm.

Production levels have risen steadily in recent years with MOFTB issuing an average of 30,000 – 40,000 permits per year. In 2007, there was an average of 64 visitors per day to the office.

Call Center

311 serves as the primary Call Center for the agency, but MOFTB does receive direct phone calls from customers.

As a by-product of production activity in NYC, MOFTB also receives feedback from residents and businesses in areas where filming occurs. 311 receives such calls and either resolves the issue or transfers to MOFTB for further resolution. MOFTB also receives calls directly from affected residents and businesses.

It is the responsibility of production companies to notify and respectfully interact with neighborhoods in which they film.

II. Agency Language Access Goals

The current language access initiatives underway at MOFTB involve the use of bilingual employees. (Languages spoken include Spanish, Chinese-Mandarin/Cantonese and French.) This occurs informally, so if a customer needing language assistance came into the office or called, the appropriate bilingual staff member, if available, would be enlisted to help.

Customer service supports are a key focus for this agency, therefore the primary goal of a language access plan is to ensure that language is not a barrier to anyone seeking MOFTB services.

Based on statistics from the 311 call center and conversations with MOFTB staff, the agency does not experience a high number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) customers in proportion to overall customers served. This is most likely due to the specific nature of the production work we support. However, if a lack of awareness about the agency by the LEP population is a factor, the agency will make an effort to address through updates to the plan. Therefore, a further goal of MOFTB's language access plan will be the tracking and ongoing identification of LEP persons seeking MOFTB services. A yearly review of the plan would be

necessary to ensure all customers are included. The agency Language Access Coordinator will be responsible for creating new tracking logs, employee awareness of the plan, measuring milestones and any eventual updates to the plan.

The agency will gauge the successful implementation of our plan by soliciting customer feedback, meeting the milestones outlined in this plan and through an annual review of the plan.

III. LEP Population Assessment

Use of the Federal Department of Justice “Four-factor Analysis” will be an important part of the plan since the identification of LEPs in the MOFTB service population is a major goal.

By using the City Planning breakdown of LEPs by CD, the different languages spoken by possible customers can be determined. The majority of MOFTB customers, however, are television networks, movie studios and professional film and television production companies rather than individuals from these CDs. Since language use data for these groups is unavailable, MOFTB had to rely on anecdotal data from a staff survey for its plan.

The agency’s Office Administrator (answering, then directing all incoming calls to MOFTB) reports that the number of calls from people demonstrating limited English or requesting language assistance (ex. Caller will say “do you speak Spanish”?) is so few as to be described as one or two per month. These calls are then transferred to a bilingual employee. The Office Administrator cannot recall an instance where a language was requested which could not be accommodated.

As for calls to the 311 call center involving LEPs, records from 311 indicate that in 2007 there were 11 calls to Language Line regarding MOFTB issues out of 3,533 inquiries and in 2008 there were 6 calls to Language Line out of 3,046 MOFTB inquiries.

In the MOFTB plan, a log will be kept with the Office Administrator at the main switchboard of all LEP requests, noting date, language and whether customer was successfully assisted. This will be to determine an official number of LEP requests directly to the agency.

The services rendered by MOFTB, issuance of permits and promotion of NYC as a location, are important to economic development within NYC through direct expenditure, industry employment and contributions to tourism. It is a business development agency, so the customer base is generally made up of private companies. Since public safety is of utmost concern to the agency when issuing permits, the agency does not render any services which would impact the health

and safety of New Yorkers. In this plan, MOFTB will begin tracking complaint calls to note if any residents were inconvenienced due to an issue of language access. This will be included in the quarterly report and subsequent yearly review.

As a small agency, resources at MOFTB are limited. The agency will continue to utilize bilingual employees when they are available. (The majority of bilingual employees at the agency work in the permit issuing department, therefore assisting customers is already within their job description.) The agency will begin formally tracking any instances where a bilingual employee assisted a customer in a language other than English. This will be included in the quarterly report reviewed by an internal Language Access Committee and the bilingual employee's supervisor.

At this point, the agency has only experienced requests directly in Spanish, French and Chinese - the languages spoken by its bilingual employees. (Chinese dialects understood by employees include both Cantonese and Mandarin.) If through the newly instituted tracking of LEP requests, the top six languages are identified, they will be considered in the annual plan review.

IV. Implementation Plan Logistics

The tracking of incoming LEP requests at MOFTB will begin as of January 1st, 2009 to ensure a full year of data for the annual review. As the Office of Operations sets citywide standards, those will be rolled into the MOFTB plan. Major milestones of the MOFTB plan and a timeline are below:

- Immediately - The agency will continue its current practice of utilizing bilingual employees for customers requesting in person and telephone assistance in Spanish, French or Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin.)
- January 1st, 2009 - Formalized tracking will begin of any MOFTB service requests by the LEP population. This includes a log kept by the Office Administrator of incoming phone calls and a log of complaint calls, if any, by residents having difficulty with a production company due to language barriers. Reports on these logs will be compiled quarterly along with LEP tracking information supplied by 311.
- January 1st, 2009 - Formation of an internal MOFTB Language Access Committee, comprised of the Language Access Coordinator, Office Administrator, Permit Reception Area Coordinator, Permit Department Supervisor and overseen by the Deputy Commissioner. This committee will meet quarterly to review LEP tracking reports and discuss any customer service supports which need to be revised or developed.

- January 1st – June 1st, 2009 - Review of all MOFTB public documents from a Plain Language perspective. This will begin at the first meeting of the internal Language Access Committee. The Language Access Coordinator will attend city training and either impart to staff or arrange for an agency specific training session. Once staff has received training, the review of documents will be ongoing and status will be determined at the end of the second quarter. This will be an important first step if it is determined later that any documents would need to be translated.
- February 1st, 2009 – For the purposes of tracking LEP requests, employees working the reception desk of the permit issuing department will be given “I Speak” cards to have on hand to assist LEP customers. These cards will not be displayed to the public since the agency has yet to encounter all 6 of the top languages needing translation. The cards will be helpful with identification of returning customers who have been assisted by bilingual employees in either Spanish, French, Cantonese or Mandarin and will be distributed only when the agency can provide appropriate services.
- September 1st, 2009 – The agency will work on creating (with input from the Mayor’s Office of Operations) a version of the Language Identification poster which indicates the languages spoken by MOFTB’s bilingual employees, Spanish, French and Cantonese/Mandarin. The target date for completion of this poster will be the end of third quarter, 2009.
- January 1st, 2010 - Annual review and update of the agency language access plan.

The Language Access Coordinator will be responsible for monitoring and overseeing the plan. This includes:

- Creating and distributing the new LEP tracking log sheets for Office Administrator and Permit Department staff.
- Compiling quarterly reports to be reviewed with internal Language Access Committee.
- Recording any updates to the plan on an annual basis.

Also serving as the Customer Service Liaison to the Office of Operations, the Language Access Coordinator will continue to communicate citywide customer service and language access initiatives to the agency. Other staff members directly involved with customer service supports such as the Office Administrator, Permit Reception Area Coordinator and Permit Department Supervisor will work closely with the Language Access Coordinator.

V. Service Provision Plan

The agency will continue to use bilingual employees for telephone and in-person interpretation (Spanish, French and Cantonese/Mandarin), but will now log the exchanges. In the future, if citywide training or certification is developed, the agency would be interested in including MOFTB bilingual employees.

At this point, great demand for language services by MOFTB customers has not been established. The agency does not expect this demand to increase and anticipates roughly the same volume of LEP customers. As mentioned earlier, the number of Language Line calls to 311 actually decreased between 2007 and 2008 (2007 - 11 of 3,533 calls to Language Line regarding MOFTB issues; 2008 - 6 of 3,046 calls to Language Line for MOFTB inquiries.) Therefore, it is not realistic for the agency to contract with Language Line at this time. However, if tracking identifies a new service population, the agency will consider establishing a task order with Language Line.

The agency awaits the recommendation of the Office of Operations in regard to translating the MOFTB website and will comply with any citywide standards. At this time, neither a demonstrated need for translated MOFTB documents nor top languages for customers have been identified. It is therefore premature to attempt to translate any essential documents. The internal Language Access Committee will review any requests for translated documents in its quarterly meetings. If a document is identified for translation, the agency will consider assistance from a volunteer language bank as soon as possible. The review of all MOFTB documents from a Plain Language perspective will be an important step, should documents needing translation be identified. This review will begin in January 2009 and is targeted for completion in June 2009.

Since the agency will continue to utilize bilingual employees for telephone and in-person translation, the agency will use the same methods of directing LEP customers to these employees. As stated earlier, a majority of MOFTB's bilingual employees work within the permit issuing department and are accustomed to listening for customers needing assistance. The bilingual employees are known to all staff members.

The agency strives to ensure the quality of assistance being provided to LEP customers by bilingual employees. Therefore beginning in January 2009, any customers receiving language assistance from a bilingual employee will undergo a brief exit interview to confirm their satisfaction with MOFTB services. Once again, this will be in Spanish, French and Mandarin/Cantonese, the languages currently spoken by MOFTB employees. The agency will rely heavily on customer feedback for the purposes of quality assurance. This feedback will be reviewed on a quarterly and annual basis.

All customers entering the agency are processed in a reception area. Laid out in an open plan design, the office has little to no existing directional signage as visitors can plainly see reception areas upon entering. Therefore, the agency will utilize bilingual employees rather than posting translated signage.

The agency intends to make customers aware of the Language Access Plan through several avenues. First, any official announcements made by the Office of Operations will be posted on the MOFTB website along with the agency's plan once it has been approved. The MOFTB website, www.nyc.gov/film, receives over 100,000 visits per month and is the agency's best tool for sharing information with the public.

The agency also publishes, on a monthly basis, an electronic newsletter with over 17,600 subscribers. Any updates to the language access plan or customer service supports would be detailed in this newsletter, as they are implemented.

The incorporation of a Language Identification poster specific to Spanish, French and Cantonese/Mandarin into the permit reception area should also increase awareness that the agency is focused on identifying customers needing language assistance. The target date for the completion of this poster will be September 2009.

V. Training

The agency maintains a weekly staff meeting where new business is presented. The Language Access Coordinator regularly updates staff on developments with customer service and language access in this meeting. A presentation of the agency's plan will take place during this meeting when it is official.

Training will begin with instruction for staff by the Language Access Coordinator on using the new logs to record instances of LEP service requests. Any additional training sessions will take place on a smaller group basis and will involve the internal Language Access Committee. A hard copy of the agency's plan and any resources as well as a roster of bilingual employees will be available to staff in a binder at the permit reception desk. Any updates to the plan would be presented to staff and all aspects would be reviewed with new employees. There will also be ongoing training with employees to ensure LEP customers are directed quickly and accurately to the appropriate staff member who can assist.

VI. Record Keeping and Evaluation

As mentioned above, the agency will institute new logs for tracking any LEP requests and prepare quarterly reports based on the data. The annual review will also look at the results of Quality Assurance measures such as customer

satisfaction reports following language assistance with a bilingual employee. An annual review of the plan will document any changes in the service population and incorporate any customer feedback regarding language services.

VII. Resource Analysis and Planning

The plan mentioned above makes use of existing staff and resources. Given the agency's customer base, this seems to be the most realistic plan of action at the moment. If any updates to the plan are made during the scheduled review periods, available agency resources will need to be considered.

The agency will make use of any citywide resources which become available and are appropriate to our mission and customer base.