



# City of Austin

## Communications and Public Information Office

301 W. Second St., Austin, TX 78701

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Doug Matthews, Chief Communications Director

**DATE:** May 2, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Council Resolution No. 20161103-052 – Progress Report #2

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Pursuant to Council Resolution 20161103-2016 (related to the City’s Language Access Program), we are pleased to provide you a second update on the project. As a reminder, the Resolution included three core requests and/or desired outcomes of the City Manager:

1. City departments comply with language access guidance issued by federal agencies.
2. Create a stakeholder team to develop a “Language Access Implementation Plan” and collaborate with other local public agencies to achieve efficiencies in the provision of language access services.
3. Develop “Language Access Procedures” for each City department that interacts with the public and prioritize departments that most frequently come into direct contact with the public.

In addition to the resolution, the Office of the City Auditor released an audit report on the City’s language access efforts in June 2016. The report found that while efforts had been made to provide language assistance services to Austin residents, the City may not be meeting the needs of all residents. As we indicated in the staff response to that audit, we agree and have been working diligently to improve the city’s performance in regard to language access.

This is the first time that the City of Austin has embraced a long-term, systemic approach toward this issue. As such, the Communications and Public Information Office (CPIO) intends to establish a sustainable, citywide framework to provide city management and the City Council with a clear idea of what structures and funding may be required to sustain a program in to the future.



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### Progress Update

Staff continues to build upon the work documented in the Progress Report issued on February 6, 2017. This includes continued work with City departments, City leadership and community members to identify and improve service delivery.

#### *Staffing*

Using the initial Quality of Life funding allocation from Council, CPIO hired a temporary employee, Vivian Newdick, PhD to serve as a Language Access Coordinator. Vivian most recently managed Seton's language access program at its 11 hospitals and is a certified Spanish Healthcare Interpreter. She also knows French and Tseltal, a Mayan language of Mexico. She earned her PhD in Anthropology from UT-Austin in 2012, where her research focused on translation of human rights testimony in Mayan languages. She is consulting with departments to develop language access procedures and plans, and is creating best-practice standards for translation and interpretation services. CPIO has included a permanent Language Access Coordinator as an FTE request in the FY18 budget. Full-time coordination of efforts will help the organization meet expectations outlined in both the Council resolution and in the 2016 Audit recommendations:

*"In order to address components four and five of the language access framework, the City Manager or designee should designate a person or persons with authority to:*

- Coordinate the timely implementation of the City's language access program consistent with the designed plan identified by the stakeholder team;*
- Monitor the program for compliance with applicable policies and regulations; and*
- Periodically update the program based on changing conditions, public input, and performance measurement analysis."*

#### *Language Access Plans & Guidance*

Departmental language access coordinators completed mandatory training in February and we expect to complete preliminary language access plans by the end of September. The plans create an opportunity for each department to look holistically at its services and customers through the lens of language access. To assist in this process, CPIO created a template and guidance document based on the Department of Justice's "Four Factor Assessment" which includes evaluating departmental target demography, frequency of contact with the public, importance of services, and available resources. Completion of these plans will ensure that all City departments receiving federal assistance are in compliance with Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." The plans will also provide a foundation for future budget planning to incorporate necessary translation and interpretation services.



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### *Community Partnerships*

The Community Advancement Network (CAN) established a Language Access Working Group that facilitates collaboration among multiple community agencies to create consistency in language access services in Austin. City staff spearheaded a sub-group to develop a language identification system that will include language identification placards that are customized for languages spoken in Austin and placed in areas where public contact/interaction is common. The tool is intended to provide a resource for interactions between people who don't speak the same language.

In addition to the language identification card, staff will develop an individual card, commonly referred to as an "iSpeak card," that Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons can carry to assist in obtaining language access through over-the-phone interpreting at points of contact with City departments. Staff will establish process and best practices that will be incorporated into training for City staff and shared with other community agencies.

We are also partnering with the Multicultural Refugee Coalition (MRC) to provide a community interpreter training pilot for bilingual City staff through the MRC's Shared Voices program. The MRC is a social enterprise with a mission to connect refugees to livelihood opportunities and strengthen local language access options by training professional interpreters. The Shared Voices program is designed to provide practical guidance on the kind of day-to-day interpretation services our bilingual employees provide to the LEP community. This may help to address another Audit finding, which raised concerns about ongoing readiness and training for employees receiving a bilingual stipend. Separately, there may be an opportunity to use community-based graduates of the Shared Voices program as an ongoing resource to interpretation needs.

### *Translation*

CPIO has worked with Financial Services to develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for seven languages (Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese). The scope of services incorporates best practices for translation procurement, including localization of language translations. The RFQ will allow us to qualify multiple vendors across multiple languages, and provide a single-point resource for departments seeking those services.

As staff works to qualify vendors and departments evaluate their services, CPIO continues to assist in translation of critical documents. Multiple departments have requested translation of documents in six languages. As those are completed, CPIO is



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developing an on-line repository of evergreen documents which have been translated into multiple languages.

### *Additional Activities*

CPIO is working with leaders in the non-profit sector that serve the LEP community to understand existing challenges with accessing critical City services. These conversations will serve to guide future language access outreach and planning.

Over the next few months, CPIO will actively work with City departments on an individualized level to ensure that the needs assessments are thorough and complete. As departments work through their assessments, CPIO will continue to identify resource gaps, establish citywide resources and develop best practices and policies to guide that work.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

**CC:** Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager  
Ray Baray, Chief of Staff  
Brion Oaks, Chief Equity Officer