



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: November 17, 2017

SUBJECT: Council Resolution No. 20161103-052 – Final Report

Pursuant to Council Resolution 20161103-052, this memo serves as the final update regarding the City's Language Access Program. As a reminder, there were 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.

Progress Update

Over the past year and a half, staff worked to improve the City's performance in regard to language access. City departments, City leadership and community members collaborated to identify opportunities for improved service delivery. With the goal of establishing a sustainable framework, staff successfully structured a network of language access support by creating the City's Language Access Program. The language access services and activities will remain adaptive as the organization and our city grows and changes. The highlights below are examples of ongoing activities.



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Departmental Language Access Planning

City departments established points of contact to take responsibility for language access planning. As a part of the planning process, each department developed a language access plan. This provided an opportunity to assess activities and needs, while also fulfilling compliance requirements within the resolution. The Communications and Public Information Office (CPIO) will analyze information gathered from the departmental plans to inform City processes, resources and service contracts.

Internal Interpretation Resources

In an effort to improve and expand internal resources for interpretation services, the City hosted a community interpreter training in partnership with the Multicultural Refugee Coalition. There were three training opportunities for bilingual city staff, and the employee feedback was positive. Not only did the workforce benefit from equipping staff with technical expertise, but the training created a positive learning opportunity that built cross departmental and cross cultural relationships. CPIO will evaluate opportunities for the training to become part of ongoing professional development, while also working with the Human Resources Department to ensure that it is in alignment with the bilingual pay program.

Service Contracts

An audit of existing contracts indicated a need for Citywide service contracts for translation and interpretation. CPIO worked with Financial Services to issue a Request for Qualifications Solicitation (RFQS) for translation services in multiple languages. The result will be multiple vendors who meet the qualifications recommended in best practices for translation procurement. Following this model, CPIO will work on additional solicitations for over-the-phone, video and in-person interpretation services.

Over the past year, CPIO has assisted City departments with translation requests for over 1,000 documents into fifteen languages, as well as coordination for interpretation needs. CPIO will continue to provide this service and technical assistance as departments further develop their resources and contracts are put into place.

Language Identification Procedures

As part of its participation in the Language Access Working Group of the Community Advancement Network (CAN), City staff led the development of a language identification system (called “iSpeak Austin”) to facilitate easy access for limited English speakers at points of contact with the public. The system includes language identification placards that are customized for languages spoken in Austin placed in areas where public contact/interaction is common. These placards are intended to help public-facing



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employees identify the language of a Limited English Proficient (LEP) member of the public before contacting an over-the-phone interpreter.

Staffing

City Council approved a new staff Language Access Coordinator position in the FY18 budget. The position will be housed in CPIO's Community Engagement Division and will work across departments to continue building upon existing efforts and further integrate language access services.

While there has been a tremendous effort to evaluate and assess departmental activities related to language access, there is still more work to do. The appropriation of resources, both in staffing and fiscal support, will further this effort. Moving forward, CPIO staff will work with departments to identify future funding and other needed resources during the budget process to ensure implementation of language access plans, including translation and interpretation services. Staff looks forward to the continued development and implementation of language access services so that we may better serve our growing and diverse community.

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