



# City of Seattle

**Office of the Mayor**  
**City of Seattle**  
Tim Burgess, Mayor

## **Executive Order 2017-10: Language Access**

WHEREAS, I, Tim Burgess, Mayor of Seattle, reaffirm my commitment to language access as part of the equitable and inclusive community engagement strategies across all City departments; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 2016-08, adopted in 2016, reaffirms Seattle as a welcoming city, which established an Inclusive and Equitable City Cabinet and stated the City's intent to protect the civil liberties and civil rights of all Seattle residents; and

WHEREAS, Seattle is a vibrant global city that should allow our immigrant and refugee residents to fully participate in, and be integrated into, the social, civic, and economic fabric of their adopted city; and

WHEREAS, equity and inclusion are essential to building relationships and improving outcomes in Seattle communities, especially for under-represented and under-served communities, including, but not limited to, immigrants, refugees, and communities of color who are among our most vulnerable residents; and

WHEREAS, Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that "[n]o person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" and requires federal grant recipients to provide language access; and

WHEREAS, State law (SB 5046) requires state agencies that provide safety information in an emergency or disaster to provide public notices of public health, safety, and welfare in a language other than English; and

WHEREAS, according to 2010 U.S. Census data, over one third of Seattle foreign-born households are linguistically isolated, which means no person 14 years old and over speaks only English, or no person 14 years old and over who speaks a language other than English speaks English "very well;" and approximately 52,000 City of Seattle residents say they "do not speak English very well;" and

WHEREAS, according to a 2014 Community Survey, 113,000 Seattle residents are foreign-born and

Seattle's immigrant population grew by 20 percent since 2000 and, according to 2012 Seattle Public School data, 129 languages are spoken in our public schools; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 01-07, adopted in 2007, commits the City of Seattle to ensuring all residents have equitable access to the City's services, information, and civic processes, guidelines on using interpretation, and translation services by City departments; and

WHEREAS, language access helps all immigrant and refugee residents, regardless of their English proficiency, have meaningful and equitable access to City programs, services, and stakeholder engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Sustainability & Environment, Office of Emergency Management, and other departments are advancing environmental equity and disaster preparedness and response programs to address seismic risks, climate change, environmental inequities, and rapid growth, which can have disproportionate effects on communities of immigrants, refugees, and people of color; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Finance and Administrative Services, Office of Labor Standards, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, and Office for Civil Rights lead efforts to advance the City's labor equity goals for immigrants and refugees, and others, with job skills development, employment opportunities, labor standards enforcement, and civil rights protections; and

WHEREAS, in November 2016, the City Council adopted Resolution 31718 and enacted Ordinance 125192, which called on the Department of Neighborhoods to work with departments to identify and develop strategies and tools to make it easier for individuals and community groups to participate in the civic life of our city; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 31718 recommends that the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs update the City's Language Access Framework for implementation by all departments, establish thresholds to identify populations in need, provide guidance to departments on how to provide language services on a project-by-project basis, and clarify departmental resources for Language Access implementation; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, with the support of the Mayor's office, met with over 20 departments to discuss the citywide Language Access Program; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs convened representatives from seven departments to evaluate the Language Access Program and determine how to advance its implementation;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TIM BURGESS, Mayor of Seattle, hereby direct departments in the City of Seattle to update and prioritize implementation of the Language Access Program by taking the following actions:

1. By December 29, 2017, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs shall provide departments with a Language Access Plan Template and a Language Access Toolkit to guide development of Language Access Plans.
2. By March 31, 2018, each department shall submit a Language Access Plan for 2019 to the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs for review and transmittal to the Mayor for approval.
3. Starting with the 2019 Budget, each department will prioritize a portion of its existing annual budget to begin implementation of its Language Access Plan.
4. The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs shall provide departments with technical assistance for language access and prioritize departments leading labor, contract, environment, resilience strategy, equitable development, successful aging, and equitable outreach and inclusive public participation programs.
5. The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs shall also prioritize technical assistance to departments involved in responding to health-related emergencies, refugee relief, disaster preparedness, response, recovery programs, and other crisis situations.
6. During a crisis, emergency, or public safety situation, all affected departments shall make it a priority to offer language access services and, when feasible, ensure bilingual staff are present and available to assist Limited English Proficient (“LEP”) residents with critical language needs.

If a crisis, emergency, or public safety situation requires posting of warning signs, the department must translate those signs into the appropriate primary and emerging languages according to neighborhood demographics. Current City of Seattle primary and emerging languages are listed in an addendum to this Executive Order.

7. Annually, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs shall update the list of primary and emerging languages based on the best available data, including the American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau.
8. The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs is responsible for the following Language Access Program oversight duties:
  - a. Work with departments to finalize Language Access Plans before they are transmitted to the Mayor for approval.
  - b. Provide technical assistance for language services to all departments, including training department staff.
  - c. Provide strategic guidance about working with LEP residents to departments, the City Council, and the Mayor’s Office.
  - d. Aid departments, City Council, and the Mayor’s Office in identifying bilingual staff.
  - e. Oversee, update, and maintain a web portal that includes a directory of qualified language service providers, sample interpretation service contracts, a repository of departments’ translated documents, and a Language Access Toolkit.

f. Provide departments with model Language Access Plans.

Dated this 2nd day of October 2017.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Burgess', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tim Burgess  
Mayor of Seattle