



LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAM

On October 2, 2017, the Language Access Executive Order came into effect, which among other actions mandated that all relevant City departments are required to have a language access plan. The Language Access Program provides technical assistance to departments so each can increase the City's capacity and competence in serving limited English proficient residents. The program's five core principles are summarized below.



Seattle
Office of Immigrant
and Refugee Affairs

About Us

Our mission is to improve the lives of Seattle's immigrant and refugee families.

We work to strengthen immigrant and refugee communities, by engaging them in decisions about the City of Seattle's future and improving the City's programs and services to meet the needs of all constituents.

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Be Welcoming

The City of Seattle has a goal of creating a more welcoming and accessible public space environment by:

- Ensuring City venues and buildings are more visually accessible for limited English proficient visitors/residents through the use of universal symbols and translated signage.
- Training frontline and customer service staff to be responsive to limited English proficient visitors/residents.
- Promoting free language assistance services at community events.

Be Prepared

OIRA has created a Language Access Toolkit to help City departments plan to ensure language access is an essential component of all appropriate programs and services. These City departments are required to have Language Access Liaisons overseeing their Language Access Plans.

OIRA oversees the development of these plans and monitors their progress. Also OIRA trains City staff on how to embed language access best practices in all of their work, with a focus on frontline programs and projects.

Provide Interpretation and Translation

The Language Access Program has

a goal of helping departments build capacity to provide interpretation/translation services by:

- Regularly updating the City's Interpretation and Translation Directory.
- Helping departments identify bilingual staff who are qualified to translate/interpret in emergency situations.
- Offering technical assistance to departments on language access best practices.

Accessible Communication

Together the Ethnic Media Program and Language Access Program train outreach staff and public information officers (PIOs) to simplify communications for immigrant and refugee communities. This enhances the capacity of staff to effectively communicate with limited English proficient residents. OIRA also maintains a list of frequently translated terms in multiple languages to ensure translation consistency.

Simplify Access

OIRA is developing an "interpretation graphic" to visually inform residents when interpretation/translation is available upon request, which will make it easier to find programs, services, rules, and regulations.