

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

March 7, 2023

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Improving Language Access in Los Angeles County

On January 25, 2022, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion directing the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) in the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA), in consultation with County Counsel, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Alliance for Health Integration, the Department of Public Social Services, other impacted County departments, as well as strategic external partners and stakeholders, to develop and submit to this Board, within 180 days, a Countywide Language Access and Equity Plan.

On October 17, 2022, OIA submitted the attached report on Strengthening Language Access in County Services (Report). As part of its research, OIA conducted a landscape analysis of federal, state, and local language access programs, identifying best and promising practices. OIA engaged over 100 County and community stakeholders to get their perspectives and feedback on barriers confronting speakers of languages other than English (LOTE) to accessing County services and programs.

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Barriers identified included:

1. The need for more consistent and centralized collection, analysis, and reporting of data on languages requested. As a part of this Report, the Office of the County Counsel conducted a language access capacity survey (Survey) of County departments, which revealed that the departments were at varying levels of capacity in the delivery of language access. For example, only 57 percent of responsive County departments have an established practice of reviewing language-need data on an annual basis. And only 47 percent of respondents have a staff person designated to respond to language access questions. These differences result in a patchwork of strategies that give the communities we serve an inconsistent language access experience.
2. The need to strengthen the quality and levels of language access.
3. The need to understand why translation and interpretation services are provided in certain languages and not others. The Survey found that 50 percent of respondents estimate that their bilingual staff receive a “bilingual bonus” at least once a year, which indicates there is opportunity to better align existing language capacity with the unmet need to serve County clients equitably; and
4. The need to update the County’s contracting system to strengthen existing partnerships, and establish new ones, with community interpreters and translators.

The Survey also found that County departments could benefit from a more coordinated approach to support their respective language access programs and capacity, including:

1. Guidance and standards for procuring and evaluating quality language service providers.
2. Support to increase a department's internal capacity for language access vis-à-vis more bilingual staff that are formally trained in interpretation and translation.
3. A need for more training for the County workforce on the County's responsibilities to provide language access and on how to adequately access language services for the public; and
4. A need for more resources and technical assistance to provide translation and interpretation in more needed languages.

Undeniably, there is an opportunity for the County to support departments in providing a more consistent and effective delivery of language access services through countywide language access protocols and policy. There is also an opportunity to provide uniform standards and guidance to departments on how to make decisions about which languages to provide translation or interpretation in based on resource constraints and the level of need.

Therefore, OIA's Report proposes a coordinated countywide language access system comprised of three main parts:

1. Designate OIA as the County's language access coordinating agency to provide technical assistance, organize language access training for public-facing departments, and support public-facing departments in aligning with

- the proposed countywide language access policy and strategic goals.
2. Integrate language access into individual departments' annual strategic planning as an equity principle. Language access coordinators from each department are to be assigned to participate in an interdepartmental language access working group established and coordinated by OIA.
 3. Charge OIA with recruiting and vetting community interpreters and translators to serve as a shared resource for departments.

Federal and state policies obligate the County to provide meaningful language access. Additionally, the County's Strategic Plan is committed to equity and to improving the life course outcomes of all County residents, including speakers of LOTE as a historically and disproportionately impacted population. The Board of Supervisors must continue working toward a social services system that is accessible to all, regardless of what language they speak.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the recommendations in the Strengthening Language Access in County Services Report (Report) that OIA submitted to the Board of Supervisors on October 17, 2022.
2. Direct DCBA in consultation with County Counsel to prepare a Countywide Language Access Policy (Policy) that will demonstrate the County's commitment to equitable access to language services for the Board's consideration and adoption.
3. Direct OIA to work with the departments of Public Social Services, Health

Services, Children and Family Services, and other public-facing departments and offices to implement the Report's recommendations for which there is existing resources and funding.

4. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to work with OIA to identify and secure adequate bridge and sustainable funding and resources to implement the Report recommendations for which there are no current resources or funding, and report back to this Board on the status of this directive within 180 days.
5. Designate OIA as the coordinating agency for a countywide language access system, focusing on these three priorities:
 - a. Providing technical assistance to County departments on their departmental language access plans, as recommended in the Report;
 - b. Coordinating language access training to complement training already conducted by County departments; and
 - c. Aligning relevant County systems and structures with County language access standards and requirements.
6. Direct OIA to work with the CEO's Anti-Racism, Diversity & Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative to align language access strategic recommendations with ARDI efforts related to data collection and County workforce training in linguistically and culturally responsive service.
7. Direct OIA to establish an interdepartmental working group, composed of each public-facing department's designated language access liaison, which

will support sharing of resources and facilitate collaboration among departments.

8. Direct OIA to build strategic partnerships with community-based organizations to expand the translation and interpretation services capacity available to the County.
9. Delegate authority to the Director of DCBA to develop a bank of interpreter services and enter into master services agreements with organizations that provide translation and interpretation services, and make these master service agreements accessible to all County departments.
10. Direct the CEO, in consultation with OIA and the Department of Human Resources, to create and establish language access for residents as a MAPP goal for public-facing County departments. OIA and DHR should develop key strategies, timelines, and appropriate measurements to for this MAPP goal, which should include recommendations for training, certification and professional development for the County workforce to strengthen language access countywide.
11. Direct the Internal Services Department (ISD) to work with OIA and impacted County departments to apply the immigrant lens and language access standards to County language services contracts, building on the work done through the Equity in Contracting initiative.
12. Direct OIA to report back in 180 days, and every 180 days thereafter until the Report recommendations are implemented.

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