



Hi, I speak Spanish.  
For me to communicate with you  
I need help from an interpreter.

Hola, yo hablo español y para poderme  
comunicar con usted necesito la ayuda  
de un intérprete.

# Language Access Report

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## Background on Language Access

According to the Migration Policy Institute, between 60,000 and 90,000 immigrants and refugees live in Albuquerque. As English-language learners, these foreign-born residents face language barriers when it comes to navigating public spaces. Approximately 67,357 Albuquerque residents speak little or no English and 5% of the total population of Albuquerque report having a hearing disability. Immigrants are not the only Limited English Proficiency populations. Some Native New Mexicans are also English-language learners.

As a city that prides itself on our tremendous diversity and one that values the contributions of all those who choose Albuquerque as their home, we strive to continue making Albuquerque a safe and welcoming place for all. The Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) began concerted efforts to increase language access in 2018 and 2019 with Mayor Tim Keller's strong support, focusing on the departments with the most high-stakes public interactions: police, fire, environmental health, planning and zoning. A spot check in 2018 showed how difficult it was for Spanish-speakers to reach a bilingual staff member or to be assisted by an interpreter. The City of Albuquerque municipal government's spending on language services was low, concentrated primarily in the Planning and Environmental Health departments, which had been sued years before on civil rights grounds for lack of language access. The Albuquerque Police Department's spending on language services was also low, despite strong advocacy from immigrant rights groups calling for vital documents to be translated and for interpretation to be provided in the field to facilitate public safety, especially around domestic violence.

OEI rapidly accelerated the rate of change in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic elevated the critical importance of communicating emergency public health information and resource availability to all residents, including English-language learners and people with hearing, vision and other communication disabilities.



In early 2020, Mayor Keller hired American Sign Language interpreters to interpret weekly COVID-19 briefings for more than a year and launched bilingual Spanish-language town halls alongside former City Councilor Lan Sena, who held town halls in four languages. Mayor Keller has continued bilingual Spanish-language town halls to this day, as a tangible demonstration of our city's commitment to immigrant integration and meaningful civic engagement. Since 2020, OEI, in collaboration with the Environmental Health Department and the Emergency Operations Center, has continued to translate important COVID-19 health information, instructions for filing civil rights complaints and materials about how to apply for financial help into at least five languages, and sometimes in as many as 11 languages.

Altogether, the City spent approximately \$100,000 from the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 until mid-2021 on language services. While the Environmental Health Department and OEI accounted for the majority of all spending on language services, there were examples from other departments: the Economic Development Department spent about \$3,000 in 2020 translating small business grant information into Spanish and Vietnamese; the Mayor's Office spent nearly \$2,000; the Office of Civil Rights spent nearly \$4,000; Family and Community Services spent about \$1,000, while Senior Affairs spent \$600.

When spending exceeded the \$100,000 threshold, the City decided to competitively procure language services by issuing a Request for Proposals. In 2021, the City contracted with four vendors with whom any department can do business, which alleviated the need for each department to enter into individual contracts for language services. That said, spending on language access took a huge dip in the second half of 2021, as COVID-19 information sharing decreased. In light of this decrease, Mayor Keller recognized the need for all other city service and program information to be made accessible to English-language learners. Mayor Keller issued an executive order in September 2021 mandating that every department invest in language access as a key strategy for informing and engaging the diverse public we serve as a city.

OEI developed a comprehensive toolkit to aid departments in complying with the order. The Language Access Toolkit contains a template for departmental language access plans, a step-by-step guide for accessing contracted language service providers, and guides on how to plan for and provide language access through both written translations and oral interpretation. OEI also provided monthly language access trainings at no cost to departments, as well as extensive technical assistance to department leaders and language access coordinators.

The City Council followed the Mayor's lead and unanimously passed a Language Access Resolution in December 2021, further

directing departments to provide language access and to budget for language services. The Language Access Resolution (R-21-231) makes OEI responsible for providing departments with technical assistance, reviewing departmental language access plans and conducting periodic, random reviews of departments to check for language accessibility. This report provides a status update on compliance and spending by departments from January 2022 to April 2022.



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# Implementation Updates

The Office of Equity & Inclusion is responsible for overseeing the following:

- **Work with departments to finalize Language Access Plans:**

OEI team conducted a presentation to all City Department Directors and provided them with a language access toolkit to provide guidance on developing a language access plan for their department. The presentation also included updates on how to utilize the city's competitively procured language access services.

- **Provide technical assistance for language services to all departments:**

OEI has provided some form of language access technical assistance to all city departments. As of the drafting of this report, twenty-seven (27) departments and divisions have attended a language access training, twenty-four (24) have designated a language access coordinator, and four (4) have drafted a language access plan that has been reviewed by the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs.

- **OEI's Culture Change Initiative partnered with Valley Community Interpreters to facilitate three citywide language access trainings from January to April 2022:**

- o January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm: 58 city staff registered;
- o March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm: 56 city staff registered;
- o April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm: 60 city staff registered.

- **Provide strategic guidance to departments about best practices for working with Limited English Proficiency populations:**

The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) based on inquiries received from city department staff. See Appendix A on page 10 of this report for a listing of FAQ's and responses.



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- **Conduct periodic reviews of departments to check for language accessibility:**

OEI conducted departmental reviews by speaking with designated language access coordinators and reviewing departmental websites to check for language accessibility. The purpose was to verify whether the language access technical assistance provided by OEI is resulting in some form of language accessibility for the public. Below is a brief overview of our findings:

- Transit department: Translated flyers for the Zero Fare Pilot Program into 8 languages: Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Korean, Spanish, Swahili and Vietnamese and posted on Zero Fare Pilot Program website: <https://www.cabq.gov/transit/tickets-passes/zero-fares-pilot-program-marketing-material>
- Parks and Recreation Department: Requested OEI technical assistance to include subtitles in various languages including Chinese, Dari, Spanish, Swahili and Vietnamese for videos for youth participating in open spaces and utilizing free public transportation to access parks and open space sites.
- Senior Affairs Department: Provided technical assistance related to translating the Senior Affairs Quick Guide into Spanish. Also provided a list of resources for immigrant and refugee populations to be included in the Senior Affairs Quick Guide: [https://www.cabq.gov/seniors/documents/cabq-quick-guide-to-senior-affairs-2022\\_web.pdf](https://www.cabq.gov/seniors/documents/cabq-quick-guide-to-senior-affairs-2022_web.pdf)
- Environmental Health Department: OEI provided technical assistance to the Environmental Health Department when issues arose related to the need for health inspectors to communicate with LEP staff at Asian-owned restaurants. Following the technical assistance provided, the Asian Business Collaborative was successful in working with the city to ensure that Health Inspection Forms were translated into Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese: <https://asianpibc.org/resources/>
- Albuquerque Police Department: Requested technical assistance to help translate documents into various Asian languages. APD has also requested OEI assistance in identifying local organizations within the Southeast Area Command to help expand the distribution of their monthly newsletter to better reach the LEP population. APD has since hired a full-time language access coordinator.
- Human Resources and Risk Management Departments: Requested OEI technical assistance to translate signage related to COVID safe practices in and around City Hall into Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese.

## Utilization of Language Access Services

The City has competitively procured four language service providers: Naomi Todd-Reyes, Valley Community Interpreters, Worldwide Languages & Communication, and Globo Language Solutions LLC. The following provides a breakdown of the utilization of these language services by department, service type, language(s) along with the total amount expended by each department from January 2022 to April 2022. The data shows that the total amount expended for the quarter was \$36,196.15. As OEI continues to engage with departments and provide technical assistance, the goal is for the utilization of services and departmental budget expenditures to continue to increase.

# Utilization Table: January - April 2022

City Department	Type of service	Languages	Total Expenses
Albuquerque Community Safety	over the Phone Interpretation Translation	<i>over the Phone Interpretation:</i> Spanish, Romanian, Vietnamese, Chinese and Swahili. <i>Translations:</i> Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Swahili, and Pashto.	\$1,322.40
Albuquerque Police Department	Telephonic Interpretation	Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Swahili	\$
Animal Welfare	Interpretation	Spanish	\$248.11
Arts and Culture			
Cultural Services	Translation	Vietnamese and Spanish	\$515.50
Albuquerque Museum	Interpretation	American Sign language	\$8,982
Bio park	Translation	Spanish	\$2,153
311 Call Center	Over the Phone Interpretation	Spanish	\$193.05
City Council	Translation	Spanish	\$374.06
Environmental Health	Over the Phone Interpretation Translation	<i>Over the Phone Interpretation:</i> Spanish, Korean, Mandarin and Vietnamese. <i>Translations:</i> Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese	\$3,448.70
Equity and Inclusion	Over the Phone Interpretation Translation	<i>Over the Phone interpretation:</i> Mandarin, Spanish, Romanian, Swahili. <i>Translations:</i> Spanish, Vietnamese, Dari, Pashto, Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, French, Chinese, Arabic, Farsi, Korean, Japanese, and Urdu	\$10,992.63
Family and Community Services	Translation	<i>Translation:</i> Spanish and Vietnamese	\$778
Finance -Accounting Division	Translation	<i>Translation:</i> Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, Vietnamese, and <u>Diné</u>	\$330
Parks and Recreation			
Open Spaces Division	Interpretation	Interpretation: Spanish and Swahili	\$809.06
Planning	Interpretation	Spanish	\$378.11
Senior Affairs	Over the Phone Interpretation Translation	<i>Over the Phone Interpretation:</i> Spanish Translation: Spanish	\$5,644.89
Grand Total			\$36,169.15

## Conclusion & Next Steps

Following the enactment of the Mayor's Executive Order on Language Access and City Council's Language Access Resolution (R-21-231), OEI through its Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs has been diligently working to provide departments with technical assistance, review departmental language access plans and conduct periodic reviews of departments to check for language accessibility. This report provides an initial status update of the city's progress on usage of available language access services. OEI plans to issue regular quarterly reports



outlining language access data. The goal of this effort is to measure whether utilization of language access services is increasing or decreasing as well as develop strategies for improving utilization of services.

Now that the city has finalized its FY23 budget approval process and based on the utilization table above, it will be incumbent on OEI to continue reaching out to departments with low language access utilization such as 311, Animal Welfare, City Council, Family and Community Services, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Economic Development to discuss what barriers may exist in accessing language access services and provide technical assistance in developing strategies to help increase utilization rates appropriate to the work of each department.

Language access is a basic human right, and the failure to defend this right is a failure to promote a fair and inclusive society. Linguistically accessible services can mean the difference between life and death, or getting a child into a program or not, or adopting a pet or not. No matter the circumstance, all Albuquerque residents, regardless of their English language proficiency, have the right to access City services.





# Appendix A

## Language Access Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. What are the safe harbor languages in Albuquerque?**

- Spanish, Diné, American Sign Language, Vietnamese, and Mandarin, all of which have more than 1,000 speakers; The City has an estimated 55,537 mono-lingual Spanish-speakers; 2,300 speakers of Northern Native American languages, predominantly Diné (1207); 2,063 mono-lingual Vietnamese speakers, 1,344 speakers of Mandarin.

### **2. Who are the City vendors for language access?**

- GLOBO Language Solutions, LLC
- Naomi Todd-Reyes
- Valley Community Interpreters
- Worldwide Languages & Communication, LLC

### **3. How my division and/or department will know what documents/videos should be translated or interpreted to?**

- The recommendation is that documents/information such as flyers, brochures, or other marketing materials that will be used for the public.

### **4. Do you have recommendations for cost effectiveness related with language access?**

- Only translate the summary of your reports. Unless there is a specific request to translate the whole document.
- Focus on translating documents that are regularly utilized by the public (i.e. permit application forms)
- Prioritize translation of information into Safe Harbor languages (i.e. Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin) and add additional such as: Swahili, Kingarwanda, Arabic, French, Dari or Farsi as funds allow.
- Request interpretation services 72 hours prior to a hearing, an event, activity, or press conference. If there are cancellations, the language access vendor should be notified with enough time of anticipation otherwise your department will have to pay for the services according to the contract terms.

### **5. What type of language access services would you recommend for events to increase community participation?**

- Offer American Sign Language and advertise that the event will have ASL interpreters available. Translate flyers for events into Safe Harbor languages (Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin) and additional such as: Swahili, Kingarwanda, Arabic, French, Dari or Farsi if possible.
- Identify areas of town where there are limited English proficient communities and analyze the demographics. This could help with having printed materials and/ or interpreters available for those populations. For example, the neighborhoods around Cesar Chavez community center have large populations of Spanish, Vietnamese and Swahili speakers.

### **6. Are executive assistants usually the language access coordinators?**

- No. The Director of the department is the one who assigns this job. It is suggested that the

language access coordinator take trainings with the Office of Equity and Inclusion regularly and be familiar with the contract process.

**7. Should we add a section to the Language Access Plan about not overusing bilingual staff who are not trained translators and interpreters and whose primary function is not to serve as language access service providers?**

- Your Department/ Division can add any section that it considers important and relevant towards following the best practices for language access.

**8. What types of critical documents need to be translated?**

- Any document that members of the public utilize regularly such as flyers, brochures, forms, applications, and other documents.

**9. What are the interpretation needs for each department?**

- A needs assessment should be developed by the language access coordinator, the director and other staff with the purpose of identifying bilingual staff, the most common languages encountered by staff when doing their job, identifying events/ activities that potentially could need interpretation, or translation services.

**10. Have you experienced reluctance from City departments to do language access?**

- We have encountered a high interest in complying with the law. As a result, we have been able to provide continuous technical assistance and trainings for most City departments.

**11. Is there a limit for the budget for language access?**

- There is no limit. Every department should propose a projected amount of contract services funds each fiscal year to be used for language access services.

**12. What is the minimum amount that should be budgeted?**

- Every department has different language access needs. As a result, your Department Director should be able to answer this question with more detail.

**13. Do websites automatically translate forms into other languages?**

- No. Neither forms nor PDFs can be translated automatically by google translate or any other website translation program. Our recommendation is to send the form to be translated and then uploaded to the website, and for interpreters to be made available to help English-language learners to fill out forms and submit them.

**14. How can we assure interpretation services beforehand for community members that would like to share their input?**

- Community members can be asked to request interpretation services 72 hours in advance of a hearing/event/activity/meeting. However, there will be cases where members of the public attend a meeting or event or come to a city site without having requested an interpreter in advance. Every effort should be made to provide meaningful access, through in-person or over-the-phone interpretation.