Language Access Follow-Up

Can You Read This?

คุณอ่านออกไหม

이것을 읽을 수 있습니까?

您能閱讀這些內容嗎？

هل يمكنك أن تقرأ هذا؟

Вы можете прочитать это?

¿Puede leer esto?

Können Sie dies lesen?

您是否能够阅读此内容？

Pouvez-vous lire cela?

Quý vị có thể đọc nội dung này không?
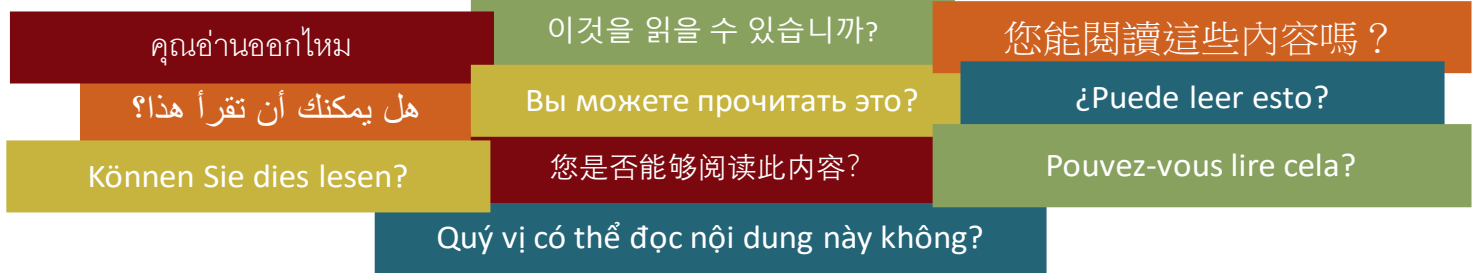
Objective

The objective of this special report was to follow up on the City's actions to implement two recommendations from the 2016 Language Access Audit and one recommendation relating to language access from the 2021 Disaster Preparedness Audit.

Background

In 2016, we conducted an audit of the City's language access services. The audit found the City may not be meeting the needs of all non-English speaking residents because written policies did not align with actual practice. It was also unclear whether language assistance programs were an effective use of City resources. We issued two findings and two recommendations.

Additionally, we conducted an audit of the City's disaster preparedness for Winter Storm Uri in 2021. Though the audit was not explicitly about language access services, we found that the City did not effectively communicate with residents before and during the storm, especially in non-English languages. As such, these residents were left without information and were disproportionately impacted. We issued one finding related to language access and one recommendation.

What We Found

We verified that all the 3 recommendations are underway.

Recommendation 1, Language Access (2016)

Addresses and aligns with the components identified in the language access framework

Complies with the requirements of Executive Order 13166 and other regulations, as applicable

Meets the needs of the Austin community requiring language assistance services

Ensures an efficient and effective allocation of resources

Recommendation 2, Language Access (2016)

Hire a designated language access coordinator

Authority to coordinate implementation of the City's language access program

Monitor the program for compliance with applicable policies and regulations

Periodically update the program based on changing conditions, public input, and performance measurement and analysis

To implement the recommendations, the City Manager and CPIO still need to do the following:

- Ensure that City departments are collecting data on their language services and sharing with CPIO

- Develop metrics to evaluate the success of language access services

- Grant the Language Access Coordinator appropriate authority to oversee the program Citywide

- Assess the resources needed to implement and coordinate the program across City departments

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What We Found, Continued

Recommendation 8, Disaster Preparedness (2021)

To implement the recommendation, HSEM and CPIO still need to do the following:

- Finalize and implement an emergency language access plan
- Assess the resources needed to equitably and effectively communicate with all limited English proficiency individuals during an emergency

HSEM and CPIO to coordinate during emergencies

Create and implement a Language Access Plan for emergencies

Prepare for communication during emergencies

Ensure that affected communities receive vital and critical information in an equitable manner

Additional Observation

- As noted in the original audit, HRD administers the Bilingual Pay Program, and it is the responsibility of City departments to monitor employees' language skills

Recommendation Implementation Status

Audit	Recommendation	Implementation Status
Language Access Audit 2016	**Recommendation #1:** In order to address the first three components of the language access framework, the City Manager or designee should establish a stakeholder team including, but not limited to, representatives from the City Manager's Office, the Law Department, HRD management, the public safety departments, and members of the public, to design a language access program that: 1. addresses and aligns with the components identified in the language access framework; 2. meets the needs of the Austin community requiring language assistance services; 3. ensures an efficient and effective allocation of resources; and 4. complies with the requirements of Executive Order 13166 and other regulations, as applicable.	**Underway** (CPIO reported as implemented October 2019)
Language Access Audit 2016	**Recommendation #2:** In order to address components four and five of the language access framework, the City Manager or designee should designate a person or persons with authority to: 1. coordinate the timely implementation of the City's language access program consistent with the designed plan identified by the stakeholder team; 2. monitor the program for compliance with applicable policies and regulations; and 3. periodically update the program based on changing conditions, public input, and performance measurement and analysis.	**Underway** (CPIO reported as implemented March 2018)
Disaster Preparedness Audit 2021	**Recommendation #8:** The Director of HSEM should work with the Director of CPIO to create and implement a Language Access Plan for emergencies to ensure that affected communities receive adequate information about all stages of emergency management, including planning, response, recovery, and mitigation activities. This plan should prepare the City to provide adequate language access during significant or catastrophic events and should include strategies for ensuring translations are timely communicated, such as pre-translated templates.	**Underway**