

TRANSMITTAL

To: **THE COUNCIL**

Date: **11/03/23**

From: **THE MAYOR**

TRANSMITTED FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. PLEASE SEE ATTACHED.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Thompson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

(Chris Thompson) for

KAREN BASS
Mayor



October 17, 2023

Council File: 22-1262
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Honorable Karen R. Bass
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**COMMITTEE TRANSMITTAL: REPORT BACK REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE CITYWIDE LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN AND THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES**

SUMMARY

The General Manager of the Los Angeles Community Investment for Families Department (CIFD) respectfully requests that your office review this transmittal and forward it to the City Council for further consideration. On April 21, 2023, the Los Angeles City Council approved Council File (C.F.) 22-1262 instructing CIFD to: (1) engage with community-based organizations (CBOs) serving indigenous communities regarding the inclusion of indigenous languages in the Citywide Language Access Plan (Citywide LAP), (2) report on the primary concerns and priorities raised regarding the inclusion of indigenous languages in the Citywide LAP and provide recommendations for addressing those concerns and priorities in the implementation of the Citywide LAP, and (3) report on the implementation status of the Citywide LAP, including the status of vacant positions within the Office of Immigrant Inclusion and Language Access, and any additional staffing and resources required to implement the plan. Through this transmittal, CIFD provides a report back on the stakeholder feedback, implementation status, and resources needed to implement the Citywide LAP successfully.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of CIFD respectfully requests that:

- I. That the City Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor:
 - A. **INSTRUCT** CIFD and other City departments, as appropriate, to collect data on indigenous languages within their service areas.
 - B. **INSTRUCT** all City departments to incorporate provision of services for indigenous languages into its Department Language Access Plan (Department LAP) and delivery of services.
 - C. **AUTHORIZE** the General Manager of CIFD, or designee, to prepare and release a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), and establish a list of qualified organizations, vendors, and/or consultants to provide indigenous language services and other necessary language services, including translation, interpretation, trainings, consultation, among other related services using existing funding.
 - D. **AUTHORIZE** resolution authority for three (3) Management Analyst (9184) positions.
 - E. **AUTHORIZE** the Controller to transfer \$138,702 within the Community Investment for Families Department (CIFD) Fund 100/21 from the Contractual Services Account 003040 to the Salaries General Account 001010 to support salaries of the three (3) Management Analysts for six (6) months for the implementation of the Citywide LAP.
 - F. **AUTHORIZE** the General Manager of CIFD, or designee, to make any technical adjustments that may be required to implement the recommendations.

BACKGROUND

Los Angeles is a vibrant tapestry of cultural diversity, prominently characterized by its rich linguistic landscape, encompassing more than 220 languages by some estimates. Yet, this linguistic richness presents unique challenges in fostering inclusivity and integration within the City's diverse communities, representing languages from around the globe.

In December 2021, the City proactively responded to these challenges by issuing Executive Directive 32 (ED 32). This directive laid the foundation for the City's Language Access Program, with its primary objective to ensure meaningful access to the City's programs and services. As directed by ED 32, the City introduced the Citywide LAP in August 2022, which serves as a guiding framework for City departments in developing their respective Department LAPs. The development of the Citywide LAP resulted from extensive internal research, data collection, and external research, comprising surveys and community input sessions involving stakeholders.

As part of the Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget, CIFD launched the Office of Immigrant Inclusion and Language Access (OIIA) in January 2023. OIIA administers programs and initiatives that help immigrants and refugees integrate into their communities and administers a Citywide Language Access Program. This program institutionalizes and strengthens the City's language access

offerings, allowing it to ensure its compliance with federal, state, and local mandates and better meet the needs of its multilingual constituency.

In January 2023, CIFD hired a Senior Project Coordinator to manage OIILA. This experienced professional serves as a subject matter expert on immigrant inclusion and language access, guiding the coordination of the Citywide LAP and various programs dedicated to immigrant and refugee affairs. One such program is RepresentLA, a public-private partnership between the City, County of Los Angeles, the California Community Foundation, and the Weingart Foundation. It provides immigration legal representation and connects immigrants and their families to essential support services. In May 2023, OIILA expanded its team by adding a Management Assistant (in lieu of Management Analyst) to support the Citywide language access and immigrant inclusion efforts, including monitoring the RepresentLA contract and special initiatives.

In an ongoing effort to address the language needs of underrepresented communities within the City of Los Angeles, the City Council adopted C.F. 22-1262 on April 21, 2023. This action directed CIFD to:

1. Engage further with CBOs that serve indigenous communities within the city, prioritizing indigenous-led organizations, in the inclusion of indigenous languages within the Citywide LAP.
2. Report on the primary concerns and priorities raised regarding the inclusion of indigenous languages in the LAP and offer recommendations for integration into the LAP's implementation.
3. Provide a status report on the progress of filling vacant positions within OIILA, along with updates on the LAP's implementation and any additional staffing and resources required for its successful execution.

DISCUSSION

In response to the City Council's adoption of C.F. 22-1262, CIFD embarked on proactive steps to cultivate meaningful relationships with CBOs, with a particular emphasis on those led by indigenous organizations. This outreach sought to gather invaluable insights for the seamless integration of indigenous languages in the Citywide LAP.

Definition of Indigenous Language

An "indigenous language" refers to a language native to a specific region, primarily spoken by indigenous people who share common cultural values and beliefs. This comprehensive definition includes languages from regions spanning North, South, and Central America, Africa, and Asia. It is important to note that many of these languages may have limited or no written components.

While the prevalence of indigenous languages in Los Angeles is not yet fully ascertained due to limited data collection, CIFD has initially focused on indigenous languages already listed in the Citywide LAP, such as Q'anjob'al, Ayuujk, Zapotec, K'iche, and Chinantec. Additionally, CIFD has considered other languages identified by community stakeholders, including Twi, Amharic, Somali, Samoan, and Tongan, as necessary languages.

Primary Concerns and Priorities

To comprehensively understand the unique needs of these populations and enhance our service provisions for indigenous languages, CIFD conducted a series of meetings and consultations with a diverse range of community organizations. Beginning in April 2023, CIFD facilitated 18 virtual and in-person meetings with various community organizations and leaders representing and serving indigenous languages and languages of lesser diffusion. These interactions have provided a platform for these stakeholders to voice their concerns and priorities regarding the integration of indigenous languages within the Citywide LAP. Below are the concerns and priorities they identified.

Concerns

- **Data Collection:** Limited data on indigenous languages can hinder the collection of accurate demographic and outcome data for indigenous populations, affecting evidenced-based decision-making and resource allocation.
- **Awareness Gap:** Limited data on indigenous languages can impact the availability of informational materials, forms, and documents related to City programs and services. If these materials are unavailable in local languages, they can hinder awareness and access to vital information about available services and eligibility criteria.
- **Linguistic Diversity and Inclusivity:** Department LAPs do not include multiple indigenous languages and dialects. Indigenous communities often comprise multiple linguistic groups with distinct languages and dialects. Department LAPs must account for this diversity, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach and emphasizing the importance of centering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), including Pacific Islander languages and other languages of lesser diffusion serving BIPOC communities.
- **Lack of Oral Tradition:** LAPs exclude oral traditions. Some indigenous languages do not have standardized writing systems or may be primarily oral. Plans should address these challenges, incorporating oral traditions, audio-visual aids, and community consensus.
- **Qualified Translators and Interpreters:** A lack of highly qualified translators and interpreters competent in the localized context and terminology leads to subpar language output.
- **Resource Constraints:** Resource constraints limit language access. Indigenous language inclusion requires additional resources for translation, interpretation, and language support services. Funding and staff training are critical to avoid the increased reliance on online translation tools and inaccurate translations.

To mitigate these concerns and improve access to City programs and services for indigenous communities, community stakeholders shared that the LAPs should consider the following priorities.

Priorities

- **Community Engagement:** Engage BIPOC communities in developing future LAPs – both Citywide and Departmental. Community input is essential to understanding linguistic diversity, cultural nuances, and the unique needs of each community.
- **Human Rights Approach:** Advocating for City departments and staff to recognize language access as a human right rather than merely a service.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Assessment:** Conduct assessments to understand indigenous communities' linguistic and cultural diversity and tailor services accordingly.
- **Cultural Competency Training:** Train staff members to be culturally competent and sensitive to indigenous communities' linguistic and cultural diversity.
- **Translation and Interpretation Services:** Invest in translation and interpretation services for indigenous languages to ensure that community members can access essential services in their preferred languages.
- **Collaboration:** Collaborate with indigenous language experts, linguists, and cultural organizations to ensure the accuracy and cultural appropriateness of language access efforts.
- **Language Access Tools:** Develop and provide tools and resources in indigenous languages to improve access to information.
- **Enhanced Data Collection:** Improve data collection to accurately count indigenous speakers and establish concrete evidence of the existence and prevalence of indigenous languages in the city.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of Department language access plans, gathering feedback from indigenous communities, and making continuous improvements.
- **Resource Allocation:** Allocate resources specifically for the inclusion of indigenous languages, recognizing the importance of preserving linguistic and cultural heritage.
- **Advocacy and Policy:** Advocate for policies and funding at the local, state, and national levels to support the inclusion of indigenous languages in Department LAPs and broader language preservation efforts.
- **Capacity Building:** Improve capacity of City departments and City staff in delivering comprehensive language services. This includes various aspects such as identifying language needs, translating vital documents, offering and assessing translation and interpretation services, monitoring language services, planning for multilingual events, and actively engaging with English Language Learner (ELL) communities. There is also a pressing need to build capacity among providers or contractors that will be providing indigenous language support.

The inclusion of indigenous languages in the Citywide and Department LAPs is a complex and culturally sensitive endeavor. It requires a collaborative, community-centered approach that prioritizes immediate access to services and the long-term preservation of indigenous languages and cultures.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Promoting inclusion and transparency in serving underrepresented linguistic communities is paramount. This involves recognizing BIPOC and Pacific Islander languages within the Citywide and Department LAPs and outlining specific strategies for enhancing access to services in these languages of lesser diffusion. In light of the priorities and concerns voiced by community stakeholders, CIFD recommends the following key priorities:

Data Collection

Gather comprehensive data to establish a baseline understanding of the linguistic requirements of indigenous communities within the city. Identify geographic areas requiring additional attention and conduct in-language surveys to gain insights into the needs of linguistically underrepresented communities.

Procurement

Issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for indigenous languages and languages of lesser diffusion to create a qualified list of organizations offering interpretation and language services. This list will enable City departments to contract with these organizations, ensuring language access for indigenous language speakers and incorporation into Department LAPs.

Culturally Responsive Training

Provide training to City department liaisons and other essential City staff in culturally responsive approaches for indigenous language communities and languages of lesser diffusion. Collaborate with indigenous-led organizations to deliver training on best practices in meeting the linguistic needs of indigenous communities.

Some of the specific training topics should include:

- **Accurate and Meaningful Identification of Language Needs:** This encompasses proactive inquiry into constituents' preferred spoken, signed, and written language, consideration of their region of origin, documentation of language preferences and linguistic variants, thoughtful consideration of literacy levels and technology access, and ongoing follow-up to ensure that communication needs are consistently met.
- **Plain Language Training:** This training approach tailors content to align with the literacy levels of a speaker's first language. This practice enhances comprehension and simplifies material translation into other languages, rendering them more accessible.
- **Terminology Training:** CIFD recommends implementing terminology training and creating a comprehensive glossary and style guide to bolster clarity and uniformity across City departments when delivering services. These resources will serve as invaluable references in maintaining consistency in language usage, ensuring a cohesive and standardized approach to service delivery.

STATUS UPDATE ON OIILA IMPLEMENTATION

CIFD has made significant progress in fulfilling its critical responsibilities since its establishment. To spearhead OIILA's initiatives, CIFD appointed a Senior Project Coordinator and a Management Assistant (in lieu of Management Analyst). Below is an overview of CIFD-OIILA's accomplishments to date:

- **Enhanced Networking:** CIFD has actively fostered and nurtured relationships with various stakeholders, including CBOs, government agencies, and local, regional, and national coalitions. This enhanced networking has been achieved through hosting and participating in meetings to cultivate collaboration and foster partnership growth.
- **Engaged in Meaningful Dialogue:** Since April 2023, CIFD has facilitated 18 virtual and in-person meetings with various community organizations and leaders representing indigenous languages and languages of lesser diffusion. These interactions have provided a platform for stakeholders to effectively voice their concerns, priorities, and recommendations on language access.
- **Vendor Contract Analysis:** CIFD conducted a comprehensive analysis of 35 current and past City contracts related to translation and interpretation services, thoroughly assessing their capacity to accommodate indigenous languages in alignment with the Citywide LAP. This evaluation extended to encompass the indigenous languages identified in the LAP and the additional languages introduced through the LAPD Indigenous Language Identification Card, such as Mixe, Nahuatl, Mam, Chuj, and Kaqchikel. As a result of this comprehensive assessment, CIFD identified four (4) vendors with varying capabilities to serve some of these indigenous languages, with one vendor designating specific languages as "supported languages," requiring pre-scheduling due to their relative rarity.
- **Stimulating Department Discussions:** CIFD has initiated discussions surrounding the capacity and strategies employed by various City departments in providing services for indigenous languages. These conversations have been effectively facilitated through five Citywide Language Access Working Group (LAWG) meetings, numerous technical assistance sessions involving more than 15 City departments, and ongoing follow-up appointments.
- **Technical Assistance:** CIFD has reviewed and provided continuous guidance for over 28 Department LAPs, offering crucial support in their development and implementation.
- **Standardized Templates:** CIFD has also been instrumental in devising standardized Citywide templates and forms to ensure uniformity in providing language access services across all City departments.
- **Support for Asylum Seekers:** During the response efforts for asylum seekers, CIFD has played a pivotal role in ensuring language access coverage. This support has encompassed translating materials, establishing connections with community stakeholders to support future language needs, and assisting the Emergency Management Department (EMD) in preparing for language availability through video response interpretation.

- **Language Access Tools:** CIFD has offered practical tools to assist City departments in closely monitoring their language access expenditures and other essential data. This resource has facilitated effective preparation, planning, and budget development for language access services.
- **Data Sharing and Awareness:** The invaluable findings and data acquired during this period were effectively presented at the June Citywide LAWG meeting, a strategic move to raise awareness regarding potential gaps in language services. The Vendor Contract Analysis revealed gaps in the City's potential ability to serve indigenous language speakers. Such data will allow us to assess the current needs and forecast future needs for allocation of resources. As additional data is gathered, CIFD can continue to share relevant information at future opportunities.

However, despite the commendable progress made by our current team, it is increasingly clear that the current workload has become unsustainable, given the extensive responsibilities of CIFD-OIILA. These responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Lead the Citywide Language Access Program;
- Collaborate with City departments to collect comprehensive language access data;
- Serve as the subject matter expert on federal, state, and local language access laws and policies;
- Advise on City-provided language access resources;
- Inform City staff, management, and elected officials about ELL constituent issues;
- Advise on Citywide procurement contracts for language services vendors;
- Prepare annual Citywide Language Access Reports;
- Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local language access laws and policies;
- Review and guide City departments on the development of Department LAPs;
- Coordinate translation and interpretation services;
- Cultivate meaningful relationships with CBOs and private partners, including philanthropic entities and other governmental partners;
- Oversee the RepresentLA contract; and
- Support the ongoing response to migrant arrivals, among other duties.

Without sufficient staffing to execute this work, CIFD cannot carry out these responsibilities effectively and meet its obligations under the Citywide LAP. This shortfall jeopardizes the availability of essential data necessary for annual departmental language access reports and undermines efforts to enhance language access citywide. Additionally, it has already led to the neglect of the following tasks:

- **Provide feedback on Department LAPs:** Between March 30, 2023, and June 30, 2023, CIFD was responsible for reviewing and offering input on the LAPs for 41 City departments. Regrettably, the team could only manage a cursory review of the plans submitted by 27 City departments, and follow-up technical assistance meetings were limited. Fourteen departments still need to submit a plan, and due to resource constraints, CIFD has only been able to engage in minimal follow-up and has yet to provide the necessary technical support to assist them in finalizing these plans.
- **Department Staff Training & Procurement:** CIFD has yet to facilitate training on various topics, including but not limited to bilingual/multilingual department staff and raising public awareness about the availability of language access services.

- **Community Input Mechanism Implementation:** CIFD has yet to host biennial Community Input Sessions, which would generate recommendations for Citywide and department plan updates and involve collaboration with select departments to implement a biennial Community Translation Review process.
- **Citywide Templates and Forms Implementation:** CIFD has developed multiple templates and forms to ensure consistency in providing language access services across all City departments. However, these tools have yet to be finalized and implemented due to the additional support needed for their rollout. These tools include, but are not limited to, the Annual Reporting Form, Offer of Interpreter Waiver Form, Evaluation Forms for Interpretation and Translation, Request Forms for Interpretation & Translation, and Language Identification Guides and Resources.
- **Consultation with the Department on Disability:** While CIFD has held several meetings with the Department on Disability to ensure the adoption of relevant accessibility best practices and models in the strengthening of the Citywide LAP and related language access efforts, CIFD has faced limitations in continuing these collaborative efforts to enhance communications access further.
- **Procuring and Working with Vendors:** CIFD has guided several departments in developing Requests for Proposals, but additional support is needed to ensure that vendor eligibility criteria and standards are included. Moreover, while CIFD has collected and provided an extensive list of City-approved vendors, it has yet to include CBOs and verify vendor compliance with Citywide LAP standards.
- **Expanded Stakeholder Engagement and Dialogue:** Although CIFD has engaged with numerous CBOs, private partners, including philanthropic organizations, and other governmental partners to share best practices, lessons learned and to foster better alignment of language access services among common constituencies, significant populations have yet to be engaged. CIFD must involve ELL constituents who access City language services and those who infrequently or do not access language services due to existing barriers.

To overcome this workflow challenge and ensure the effective execution of OIILA's mandate, CIFD seeks General Fund resolution authority for three (3) Management Analyst positions for six (6) months of funding (January 2024 - June 2024). The responsibilities of these proposed positions are detailed below.

Management Analyst – Monitoring and Evaluation

- Facilitate and process language service requests from departments by corresponding directly with vendors;
- Provide support and guidance for collecting relevant language access services metrics (tracking) and reporting data from departments, including data in order to make pertinent updates to the LAP and advise on language access services budgeting;
- Track concerns and best practices raised by departments, monitoring Department LAPs;
- Support and facilitate LAWG meetings;
- Assist in providing technical assistance to departments on biennial updates to their LAPs;

- Assess the City's internal capacity to provide language access;
- Coordinate interdepartmental translation and interpretation requests;
- Lead in addressing any language access-related complaints received by departments, recruiting the support of the City Attorney's Office, as needed; and
- Design Citywide forms and templates to assist in more uniform provision of language access services across departments.

Management Analyst – Community Management

- Serve as a primary point of contact with/for external partners and constituents, including government agencies, regional coalitions, and philanthropic partners;
- Lead the community input process and coordination of listening sessions and provide counsel based on feedback collected to optimize the accessibility of information and services for ELL constituents;
- Facilitate and process language service requests from constituents and CBOs;
- Connect external partners with City departments to fulfill language service requests;
- Amplify collaboration opportunities for external partners;
- Ensure consistency in the complaint process across departments, refine the complaint process as necessary, and monitor responses to complaints submitted through the portal;
- Analyze data trends in constituent and community feedback to advise on the existing City-provided language access resources available to Angelenos and any emerging needs, including, but not limited to, providing recommendations on response efforts and additional resources or staffing;
- Inform City staff, management, and elected officials about the issues ELL constituents face in accessing City services through information gathered in LAWG, community listening sessions, and other feedback provided by the public; and
- Assist in compiling and analyzing data from ADA language access-related complaints received by departments.

Management Analyst – Policy Management

- Research current laws and policies related to language access to support compliance with federal, state, and local language access laws and policies;
- Share research findings at monthly LAWG meetings with the City Council and the Office of the Mayor;
- Develop research-based solutions to improve language access services by investigating best language access practices in other municipalities and making policy update recommendations based on these findings;
- Assess vendor contracts and subcontractors' ability to provide language access and make policy and procurement recommendations based on identified areas of strength and improvement;
- Assist with compiling and analyzing data from annual Department Language Access Reports received by the Coordinator for the creation of the annual Citywide Language Access Report;
- Collect, research, and analyze the latest data on languages spoken by ELL individuals in the City of Los Angeles through the use of Census and local data, including that collected from departments;
- Review, prepare, and remediate translated documents for ADA compliance using programs such as Adobe Acrobat Pro and CommonLook;

- Evaluate translated City and department documents and websites for ADA compliance on a sample basis. Provide departments with feedback;
- Assess current City language access platforms and tools such as translation databases, remote interpretation platforms, call lines, and interpretation equipment to assist in providing the most up-to-date recommendations for City department use; and
- Consult with the City of Los Angeles Department on Disability to advise on relevant accessibility best practices and models that may be adopted to strengthen the Citywide Language Access Program and related efforts around language access.

These three (3) additional positions are critical to fulfilling the extensive scope of work that Executive Directive 32 outlines, ensuring equitable distribution of responsibilities, and guaranteeing the City's compliance with legal mandates concerning language access to information and services.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

CIFD will rely on its FY 2023-24 Budget to support the three (3) Management Analyst positions and the contracts resulting from the RFQ. No additional funding will be requested to support this fiscal year's request.

While the program will affect the General Fund in the future, the potential return on investment is estimated to outweigh the program costs.



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