2021 *Language Access in San Francisco*

SF LANGUAGE ACCESS ORDINANCE SUMMARY REPORT







INTRODUCTION

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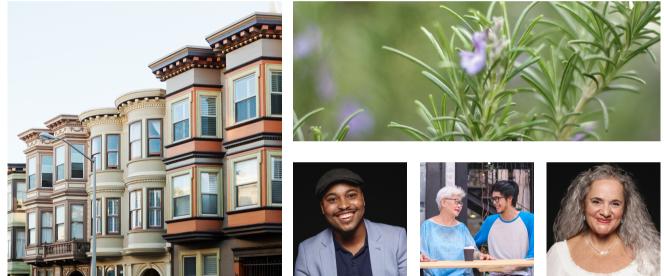
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2021 Language Access in San Francisco

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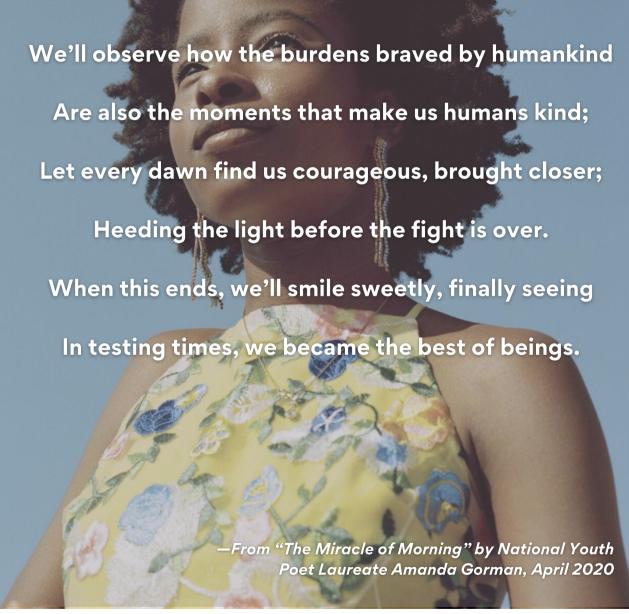
About This Report

This report is dedicated to the many frontline health, safety, bilingual and essential workers who are tirelessly getting us through the tough year and days ahead.

The annual Language Access Ordinance Summary Report evaluates citywide compliance and progress with the San Francisco Language Access Ordinance (LAO). As required by the LAO, the annual report is submitted to the Board of Supervisors and the Immigrant Rights Commission by February 1 of each year. This year's report covers Fiscal Year 2019-2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020) and includes all data submitted by October 1, 2020 by reporting departments.

In addition to overseeing compliance, the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) assists City departments, the Mayor's Office, and the Board of Supervisors to better meet the language needs of San Francisco's Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents and workers. These services include trainings, tools, resources and recommendations to increase capacity and provisioning for language access services. On a limited basis, OCEIA's Language Access Unit also provides direct translation and interpretation assistance.

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(Photo by Kelia Anne)

Introduction

A once-in-a-century global pandemic, a confusing 2020 Census count, a cry for justice and racial equity, an uncivil war and insurrection over a fair election, a democracy at risk and the rebuilding of a nation — these were the major challenges of the past year and the earmarks of one of the most tumultuous and violent times in this nation's recent history.

Cities across the country faced these challenges while grappling with existing issues of homelessness, affordability, livability, transportation and more. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare longstanding inequities in access to information, health care, government services and resources. As local, state and federal governments, health care providers and hospitals struggled to respond to this global emergency, among those left behind were people in poverty, people experiencing homelessness, Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, people who speak a primary language other than English, and those without digital access.

If there was ever a moment in time when language access was critical, it was during this pandemic. About 66 million people in the United States speak a language other than English at home and nearly 22%, or 26 million, speak no or limited English. In California, 44.1%, or about 5.8 million households, are considered "limited English-speaking." During the pandemic, many non-English speaking COVID-19 patients have lacked access to interpreters, personal protective equipment (PPE), timely information in language, and other emergency services. Lives depend on each of us communicating, understanding and following health orders, and respecting the health and safety of others.

As the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) enters its 12th year of implementing the Language Access Ordinance (LAO) and advancing language equity in San Francisco, we recommit ourselves to working with the Immigrant Rights Commission, City agencies and leaders, and community partners to build stronger language access capacity. Language access is about more than increasing budgets and listing bilingual employees on the payroll; it's about empowering City employees to do all that they can to better serve the public. It's about making it possible for our residents, workers, students and visitors to navigate city systems, access critical services, be informed in a timely manner and participate in ways that are relevant and meaningful.

As inaugural poet laureate Amanda Gorman said on January 20, 2021, "We are striving to forge our union with purpose. To compose a country, committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man."

In a world-class city that prides itself on being innovative, a willingness to change and adapt to being more just and equitable will make San Francisco stronger and resilient. We do this by including and lifting up **all** our people, so they can live safely, participate, achieve, contribute, and thrive.

That's what a democracy and an inclusive city and nation should be.

Adrienne Pon, Executive Director

January 2021

Report Summary

Each year, the Language Access Ordinance (LAO) report provides San Francisco's policymakers with a picture of how City departments are doing overall in meeting the spirit, intent, and requirements of the LAO. The information helps identify successes as well as barriers faced, and can be used to help City departments better serve Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities.

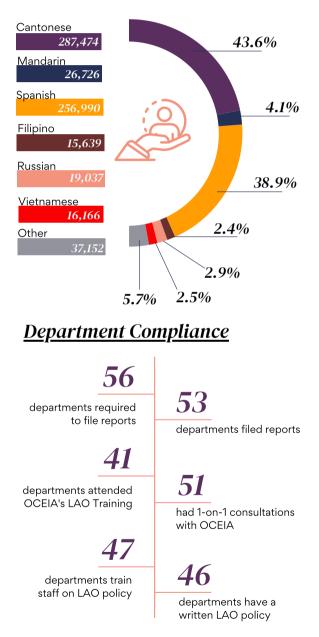
This year's self-reported data from that. indicates departments in the aggregate, the City is meeting its language access requirements. However. departments faced a number of challenges in providing language services; since Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2018, both the number of bilingual employees and the number of LEP client interactions have continued to decline.

Notably, departments increased their language services budgets significantly this year. This is an indication that they understand the importance of making programs, services and information accessible to all San Franciscans.

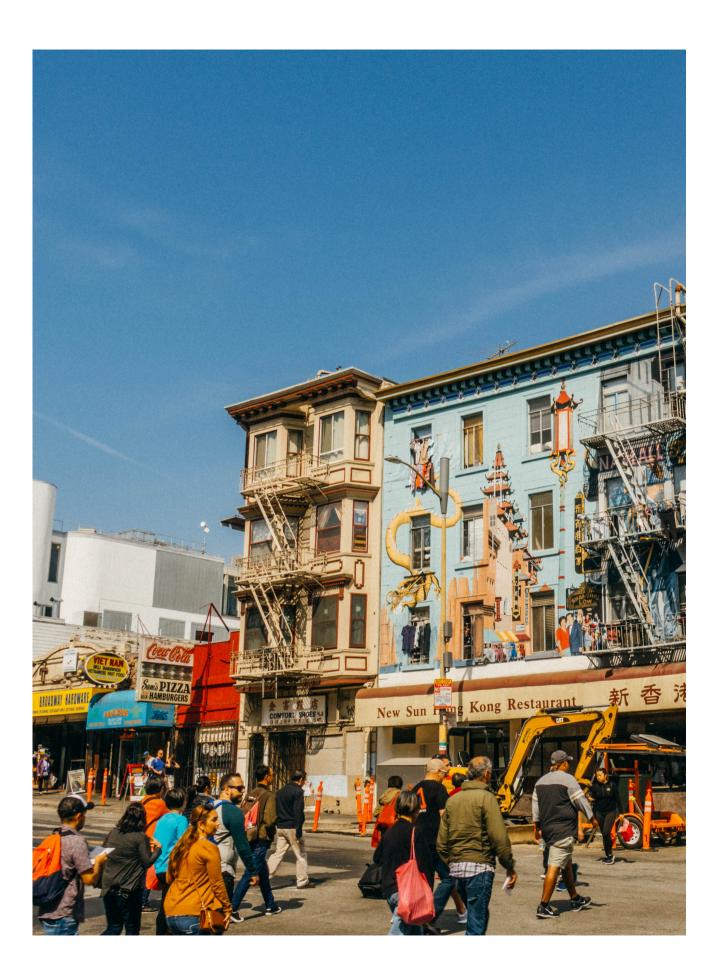
City departments that helped provide services and information related to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency reported making language access a central part of their work. Because the public health order was announced in March 2020, during the third quarter of the period covered by this report, this investment in language services may be more evident in next year's report.

Although language services budgets increased across the board, there has not been a simultaneous increase in the number of bilingual staff. City departments should identify bilingual staff with the language fluency to translate and/or interpret vital or complex information, particularly during public health and safety emergencies.

LEP Client Interactions



The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the value of language access and the continuous need to prioritize this as essential in order for residents, workers and members of the public to be fully informed and able to cooperate and respond during emergencies and disasters.



Findings

Although this report covers a full fiscal year (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has been a key factor in reported data, especially during the fourth quarter of the year (April 1 to June 30, 2020). The pandemic presented many challenges and disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), immigrant, Limited English Proficient (LEP) and vulnerable populations. Overall, City departments responded by dedicating more resources to language services, but without simultaneous increases in the number of bilingual staff. It would be advisable for departments to assess if bilingual staff are adequately trained and able to respond to a public health emergency of the magnitude of COVID-19, or if other solutions can be implemented to better meet the language needs of nearly half of the City's population.

Increased Investment

The total language access services budget across all departments this year was \$22,737,599, a more than 40% increase from \$16.1 million in the previous year. However, when compared to the City's total operating budget, this amount remains a small fraction, at less than 1%.

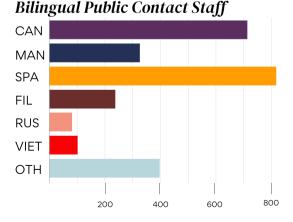
The top five departments that increased their language services budgets this year (FY 2019-2020) were:

- Department of Building Inspection with a \$505,784.00 increase (20.01%)
- Department of Elections with a \$4,510,668.00 increase (273.31%)
- Human Services Agency with a \$91,541.93 increase (6.24%)
- Municipal Transportation Agency with a \$1,220,743.40 increase (80.95%)
- Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs with a \$678,144.93 increase (600.10%)

During a major national election and global public health emergency, these numbers show that departments made a significant effort to ensure that all San Franciscans had access to services and timely information in their language. The 2020 presidential election was undoubtedly a factor in the significant increases in the Department of Elections' budget for language services.

Bilingual Staffing

There are 2,570 reported bilingual staff across all departments — 1,585 of whom are certified. They include 714 staff members who speak Cantonese, 326 who speak Mandarin, 818 who speak Spanish, 238 who speak Filipino, 102 who speak Vietnamese, 82 who speak Russian, and 398 who speak another language. Some employees speak multiple languages (for example, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese).



An important issue to note is the overall decrease in the number of bilingual staff starting in FY 2017-2018, although 40 out of 53 departments reported having adequate levels of bilingual employees.

Intake Methods Used by Departments

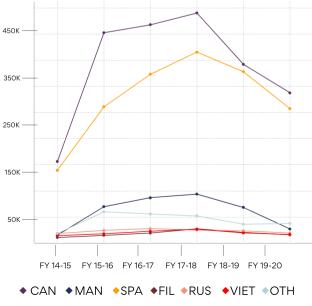
Since 2009, the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) has encouraged departments to use reliable methods for collecting and reporting more detailed language access data. After OCEIA developed forms and digital tools that could be used across the City, departments have significantly improved in this area and have shifted to using intake forms instead of surveys and telephone calls to count client interactions. Of 53 departmental submissions for FY 2019-2020, 28 departments used an intake method, 11 departments used a survey, 10 departments used telephone logs, and four departments used other methods to estimate the number of LEP clients.

- **Intake Method:** Forms that include questions about a client's primary language. The information entered on these forms is often stored in an digital database/customer relationship management (CRM) system. These data systems should have the capability to generate reports based on primary language.
- <u>Survey Method</u>: Conducting an annual survey of all contacts with the public during a period of at least two weeks.
- <u>Telephonic Method</u>: Calculating the annual number of requests for telephonic interpretation services, based on phone logs.

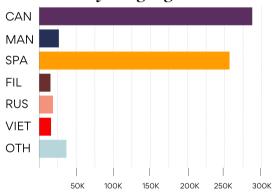
LEP Client Interactions

Of 28,539,171 client interactions reported across all departments, 2.3% (659,184) were with LEP clients. Of these, 287,474 (43.6%) were in Cantonese, 26,726 (4.1%) were in Mandarin, 256,990 (38.9%) were in Spanish, 15,639 (2.4%) were in Filipino, 16,166 (2.5%) were in Vietnamese, 19,037 (2.9%) were in Russian, and 37,152 (5.7%) were in other languages.

LEP Interactions Over Time



LEP Clients by Language



Despite an increase in the City's total population, departments reported that LEP client interactions across all languages decreased, with the largest drop in Cantonese, Spanish, and Mandarin LEP clients.

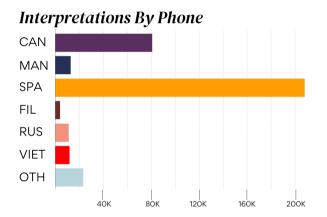
For FY 2018-2019, departments reported 811,645* total LEP client interactions, a decrease from the previous reporting period. In FY 2019-2020, that number continued to by 19%, to 659,184 LEP decrease interactions. Another important trend to the percentage LEP observe is of interactions as a proportion of all client interactions citywide.

*Numbers reported may include multiple interactions with the same client; departments may be reporting bilingual interactions of any duration, not just LEP interactions.

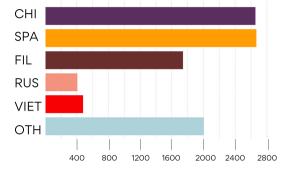
In FY 2018-2019, LEP clients represented 6.4% of the total client population. For this reporting period, those interactions decreased further. Of 28,539,171 client interactions reported across all departments, only 2.3% (659,184 interactions) were with LEP clients. These numbers could reflect the impact of COVID-19 on the community, but further research and a different methodology would be needed to determine all factors.

Translations

Translation of written documents increased significantly in this reporting period over the previous year, from 4,889 translations to over 8,435 translations. The largest increases were in Spanish and Filipino. Of 8,435 translations across all departments, 2,657 (31.5%) were in Chinese, 2,668 (31.6%) were in Spanish, 1,743 (20.7%) were in Filipino, 480 (5.7%) were in Vietnamese, 409 (4.9%) were in Russian, and 478 (5.7%) were in other languages.



Translations by Language



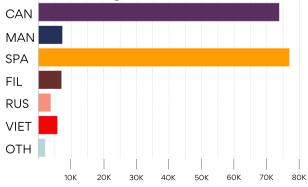
Telephonic Interpretation

There was also an increase in telephonic interpretation. Of 353,440 phone interpretations across all departments, 80,989 (22.9%) were in Cantonese, 13,013 (3.7%) were in Mandarin, 208,139 (58.9%) were in Spanish, 4,263 (1.2%) were in Filipino, 12,116 (3.4%) were in Vietnamese, 11,402 (3.2%) were in Russian, and 23,518 (6.7%) were in other languages.

In-Person Interpretation

In-person interpretations dropped from the previous fiscal year, likely due to the public health orders that closed public offices and City buildings. Of 176,568 in-person interpretations across all departments, 73,767 (41.8%) were in Cantonese, 7,300 (4.1%) were in Mandarin, 76,913 (43.6%) were in Spanish, 7,054 (3.9%) were in Filipino, 5,766 (3.3%) were in Vietnamese, 3,760 (2.2%) were in Russian, and 2,008 (1.1%) were in other languages.







Snapshot of San Francisco







34.3% Foreign-born population in SF



19.5% SF residents who identify as LEP



43.1%

SF residents over the age of 5 who speak a language other than English at home



109*

Languages spoken in SF



127*

Languages spoken in the Bay Area

*These numbers represent a marked departure from previous reports due to a change in how the United States Census Bureau categorizes and codes language data.



San Francisco residents is an immigrant.



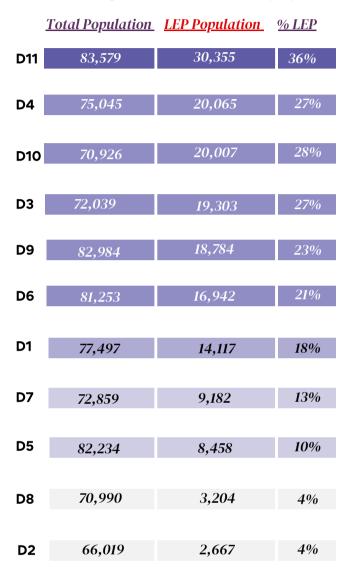
With 34.3% of its residents born outside of the U.S., San Francisco remains one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse cities in the country.

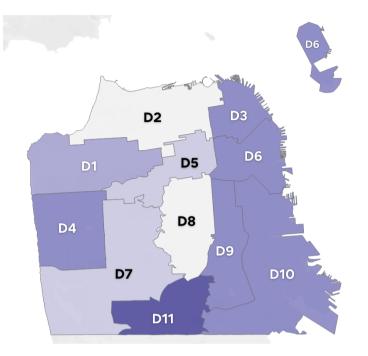


All data from United States Census Bureau's 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Supervisorial Districts

From the highest to lowest LEP population:





For full data on San Francisco's LEP population by supervisorial district, neighborhood, and top five languages spoken, visit:

bit.ly/sflanguagedata



All data from United States Census Bureau's 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Looking Back

Looking Back on 2020

The Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) works with language access liaisons from every department to coordinate services and assistance. Liaisons receive resources, tools and special training on language access laws, data collection, tailoring implementation and service provisioning to clients, and planning.

The 2020 Census, one of the most politically charged and confusing in history, required increased resources and staff time from OCEIA to produce multilingual, multicultural information and inclusive materials that reflected San Francisco's diverse populations and languages. Department liaisons played an important role in ensuring that the public was informed and motivated to participate, despite insufficient support and direction from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the way City departments provided services to the public, and one of the biggest impacts can be seen in language access. From the creation of the COVID-19 Command Center to the pivot to remote Board and Commission meetings, departments had to rethink the way they did business. During this reporting period, language access liaisons played a crucial role as City departments shifted their service models to meet additional needs due to the pandemic. Liaisons worked to ensure that Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents and workers continued to have equal access to timely information and opportunities for civic engagement in their languages.



San Francisco Digital Services and Department of Public Health

When the Shelter-in-Place order took effect on March 17, 2020, one of the biggest challenges was how to keep COVID-19-related translations updated on the SF.gov website. San Francisco Digital Services worked to ensure that online information was written in clear, plain language. The Department of Public Health provided essential COVID-19 information with translations in threshold and other languages.



San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency

San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) recognized that the challenges brought on by the pandemic could disproportionately impact LEP community members, including those who may be more reliant on public transportation. To enhance accessibility, SFMTA partnered with ethnic media, expanded multilingual content on its website, and distributed multilingual mailers to inform residents about service change updates and how to take public transportation according to COVID-19 protocols.



San Francisco Board of Supervisors

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors was one of the first governing bodies in California to shift to remote meetings. The Office of the Clerk of the Board immediately partnered with OCEIA to ensure that LEP constituents had equal opportunities to participate. OCEIA's small team of interpreters continue to assist on a stand-by basis to support constituents who need interpretation services in Cantonese, Mandarin, Filipino and Spanish.



Recreation and Park Department, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, and the San Francisco Public Library

RPD and DCYF led the effort to provide free emergency child and youth care to families of City health care workers, Disaster Service Workers, and other frontline COVID-19 workers at the start of the pandemic. This successful effort led to the creation of the Community Hubs Initiative, a neighborhood-based strategy in partnership with the Library and community organizations, to support families during the school year. Multilingual information was distributed throughout the City and available on websites.

The Language Access Network of San Francisco

Established in 2012, the Language Access Network (LAN) is a coalition of community-based organizations funded by OCEIA to provide education and outreach on language access rights and services, report violations of the LAO, and provide community feedback to City departments on best practices in serving other-than-English proficient communities. In 2020, LAN educated over



Chinese for Affirmative Action

10,000 community members; conducted over 100 spot-checks of City departments; and partnered to provide greater access to citywide services and crucial information. Throughout the pandemic, LAN has advocated for more timely and accurate in-language information from emergency and public health departments.

LAN Partners include:









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CALACALI 💥 21

Central American Resource Center

www.carecensf.orc



Looking Forward



Language Access in a COVID-19 Recovery Period

In April 2020, Mayor London N. Breed and Board of Supervisors President Norman Yee created the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force (Task Force) to respond to the urgent needs of San Francisco's workers, businesses, organizations, and vulnerable populations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Co-chaired by San Francisco Assessor-Recorder and incoming City Administrator Carmen Chu, San Francisco Treasurer José Cisneros, Rodney Fong, President and CEO of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and Rudy Gonzalez, Executive Director of the San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO, the 100-member Task Force was comprised primarily of members of the public. The Task Force was charged with guiding the City's COVID-19 recovery efforts to sustain and revive local businesses and employment, mitigate the economic hardships affecting the most vulnerable San Francisco's diverse communities, the Task Force sought out the perspectives of underrepresented populations through the Community Engagement and Listening team to amplify the voices of community members disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Specific insights about Limited English Proficient (LEP) and immigrant communities included:

- The need for culturally responsive, timely, accessible, and concise information and guidance for small business owners and residents, particularly those with language and technology barriers.
- Increasing digital literacy and updating tools to bridge the digital divide for many vulnerable populations, including seniors, people with disabilities, parents and students, non-English monolingual speakers, and small business owners.
- Culturally competent, in-language communications and solutions are essential.
- The need to invest in Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and immigrant communities.

Recommendations



Increase language services planning and coordination for natural disasters and public health and safety emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that advance preparation and close coordination across emergency response and public serving departments is vital to informing the public and keeping everyone safe. While the Language Access Ordinance (LAO) requires departments to prepare emergency plans, departments still struggle with providing adequate translation and interpretation services during emergencies and public health or safety situations. The expectation that the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs' (OCEIA's) small unit of only 2.5 language specialists can handle all emergency requests simultaneously from multiple departments is unrealistic. An interagency team needs to be convened to work with OCEIA, the Immigrant Rights Commission, and key departments to 1) develop and build emergency language translation and interpretation capacity and protocols; and 2) train bilingual-certified employees who have adequate levels of language fluency in the languages understood and spoken by San Francisco's diverse populations. Website translation should be adequately funded and supported so that information is culturally and linguistically accurate across departments and easily assessible on the City's official website.

Expand bilingual certification and language fluency testing in both threshold and emerging languages.

The Department of Human Resources currently tests and certifies bilingual employees in 10 languages. Certification ensures that employees meet a minimum standard of proficiency in their language skills and comes with a modest pay incentive to encourage more utilization of language abilities. To better serve the City's diverse residents, certification could be expanded to all languages that are consistently used by departments to better meet the needs of residents and workers, including both threshold (Chinese, Filipino, Spanish) and non-threshold languages such as Russian, Vietnamese, Korean, Mayan, Arabic, French Creole, et cetera. It is also recommended that an intermediate and/or advanced level assessment be developed to identify bilingual employees who can perform translation and interpretation during emergencies and public health or safety situations.

3

Increase city and community language access capacity.

Moving forward, OCEIA will begin implementation of the Community Interpreters Bank Pilot Program by May 2021, working closely with City departments and communitybased organizations to increase City and community capacity for language access, as well as exploring economic opportunities in language services for bilingual community members.

While the LAO requires departments to be responsible for provisioning translation, interpretation and other language services to meet the needs of their clients and city residents, OCEIA will continue to update tools, provide professional training and assist departments with their planning.

OCEIA's Language Access Unit will continue to partner with the Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to increase civic participation in public meetings. OCEIA will also continue to provide limited direct language assistance to departments for urgent, emergency, and public safety situations.

4

5

Develop more robust assessment, training and support for bilingual City employees.

There is currently no citywide budget allocated to ongoing training and support for bilingual employees and their use of language skills on the job. While OCEIA has increased the number of City employees trained through its Language Access Academy, a series of trainings developed to address the specific needs of City staff, ongoing support and advanced skill development need to be supported and funded to ensure the highest quality of language services to the public. Although San Francisco's largest LEP populations are Chinese, Filipino and Spanish, the City serves many residents who speak languages of lesser diffusion and with greater emerging needs. Many newcomers from these communities struggle with accessing basic services and information. The Department of Human Resources could work with OCEIA to identify advanced training programs that support both written and spoken language comprehension and develop various levels of certification (basic, intermediate, advanced/professional), as well as quality standards. As departments increase their investment in language access resources and perform proactive outreach, the quality and consistency of translated materials and interpretation across departments is critical.

Increase accountability for language access provisioning and LAO compliance.

While OCEIA conducts data collection, trains departments on the LAO, develops tools and resources, and summarizes compliance using a variety of metrics, the Immigrant Rights Commission could support compliance by reconvening its Language Access Committee and implementing a joint task force that includes language experts, community members and leaders to identify mechanisms to increase accountability and confirm self-reported data by departments. While compliance has been linked to the budget process in the past, there is no consistent way of enforcing LAO requirements for implementing language access plans, staffing and budgets.



Department List

311

Adult Probation Animal Care & Control Arts Commission Asian Art Museum Assessor-Recorder **Board of Appeals Board of Supervisors Building Inspection** Children, Youth & Their Families Children & Families Commission **Child Support Services** City Administrator **City Hall Events Civic Engagement & Immigrant** Affairs **County Clerk District Attorney's Office** Elections **Emergency Management - 911** Environment **Ethics** Commission Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco Fire Department Homelessness & Supportive Housing Human Rights Commission Human Services Agency **Juvenile Probation** Labor Standards Enforcement Mayor's Office

Fiscal Year 2019-2020

Mayor's Office of Housing & **Community Development** Mayor's Office on Disability Medical Examiner Municipal Transportation Agency Office of Cannabis Office of Economic & Workforce Development Office of Resilience & **Capital Planning** Office of Transgender Initiatives **Planning Department** Police Accountability **Police Department** Port of San Francisco Public Defender's Office Public Health Public Library **Public Utilities Commission Public Works Real Estate Division Recreation & Parks Rent Board** San Francisco International Airport San Francisco Zoo Sheriff's Department Status of Women Treasure Island **Development Authority** Treasurer & Tax Collector War Memorial

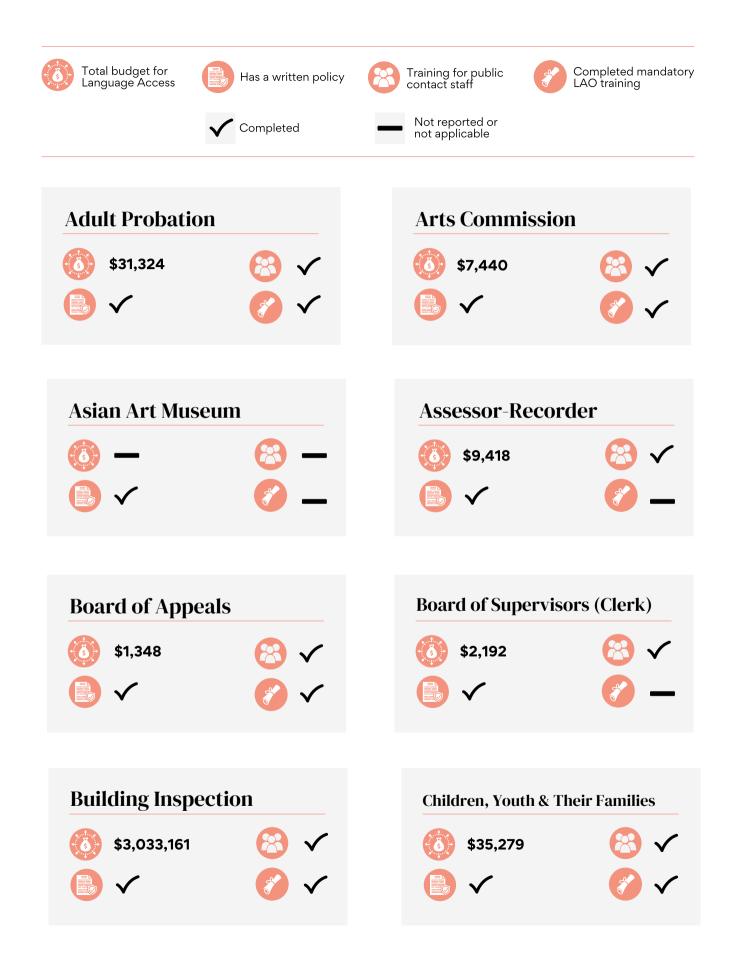


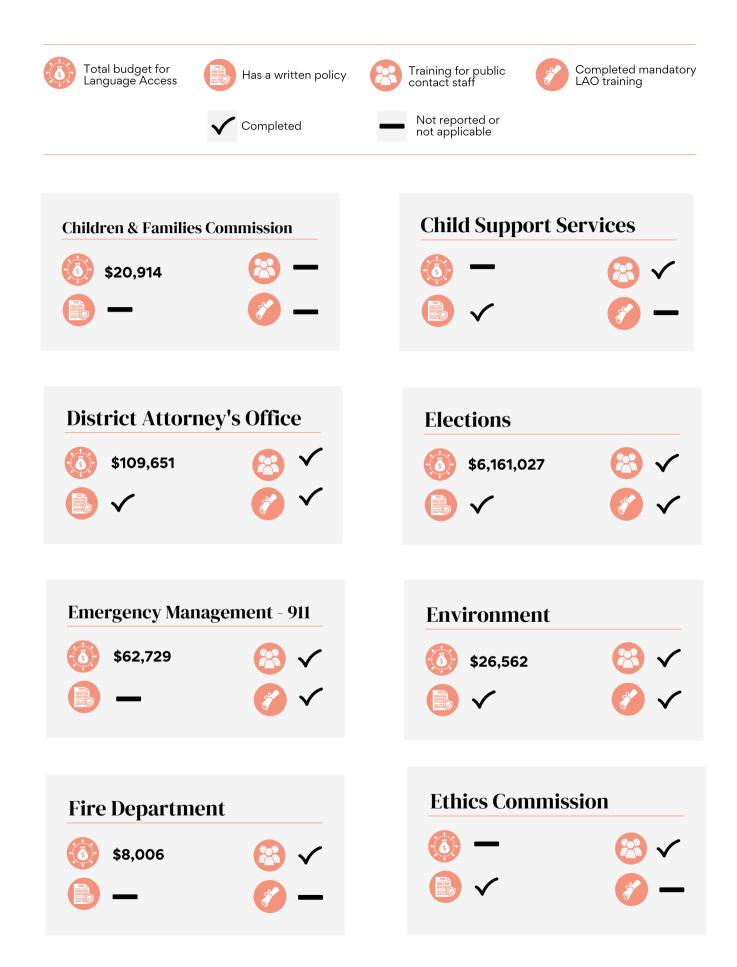
Department Highlights

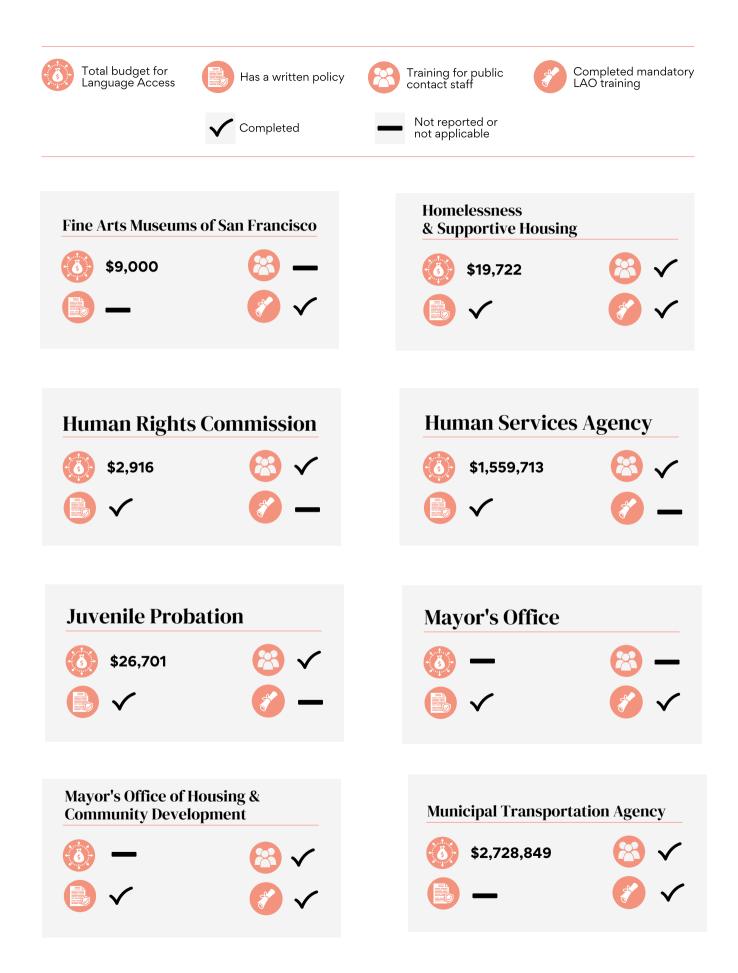
For City Administrator's Divisions, turn to page 24.

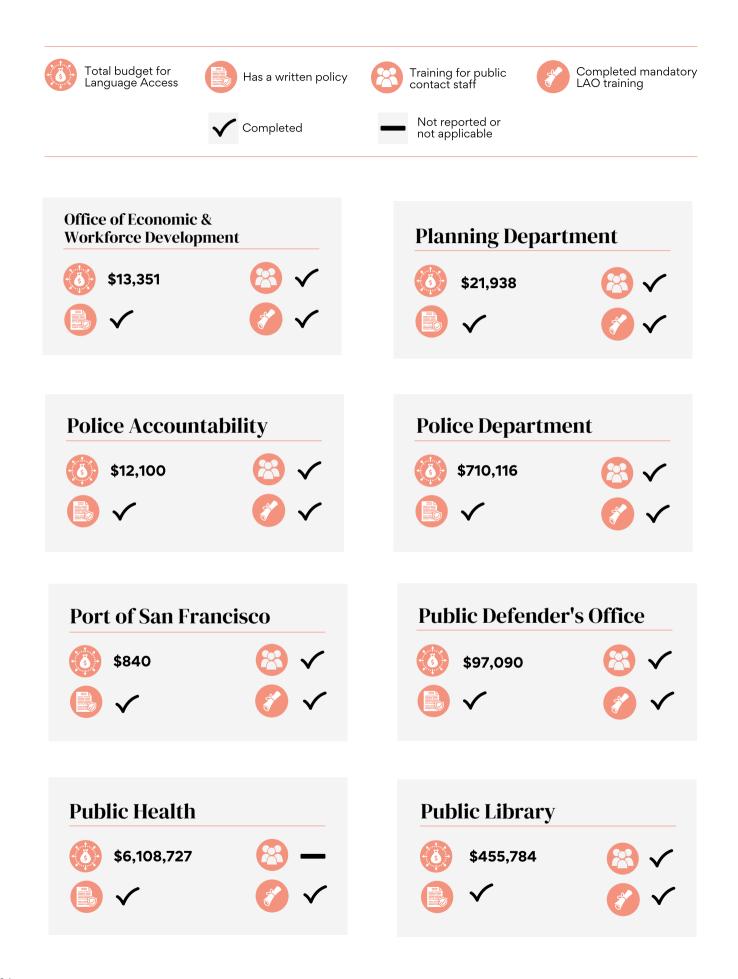
Full and complete data required by the LAO may be viewed in the individual department dashboards. Visit:

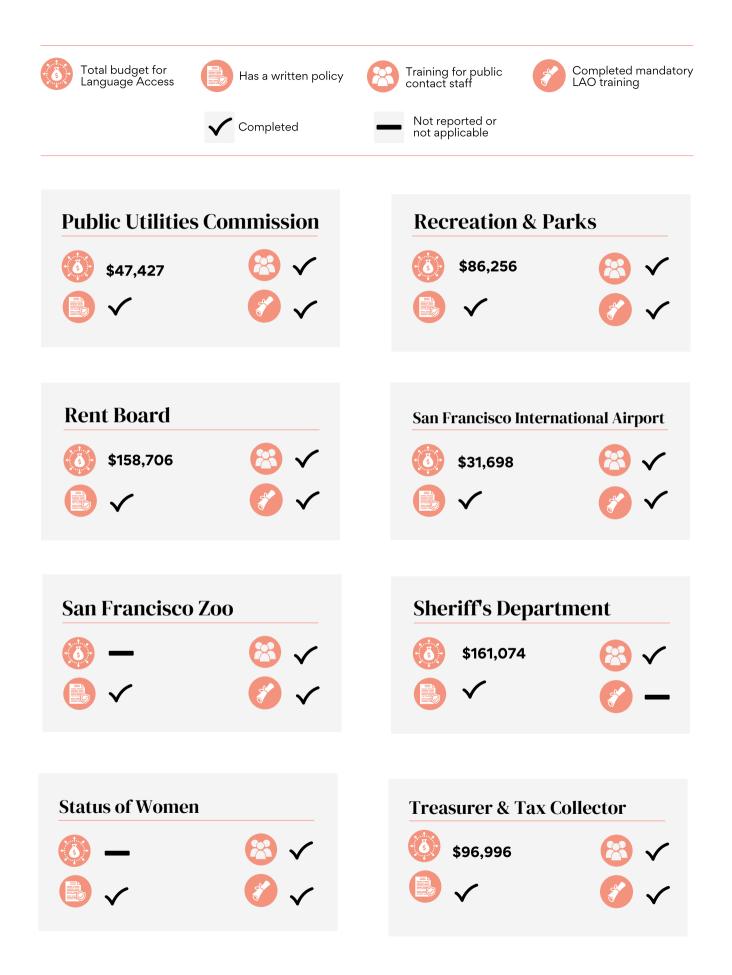
bit.ly/laodashboards





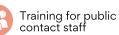








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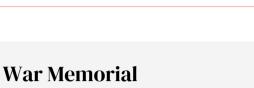


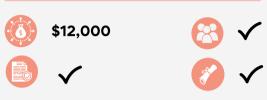
Not reported or

not applicable



Completed mandatory LAO training



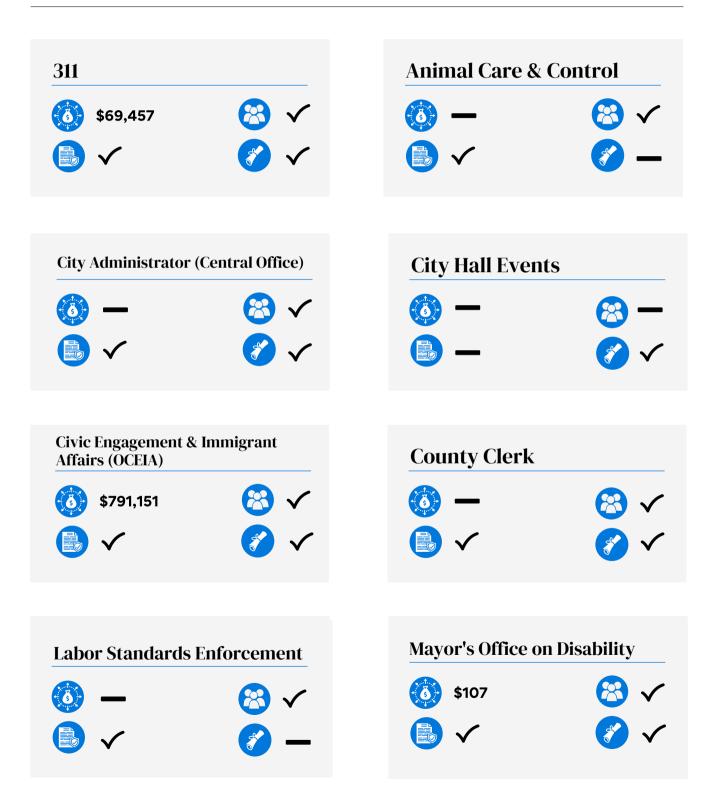


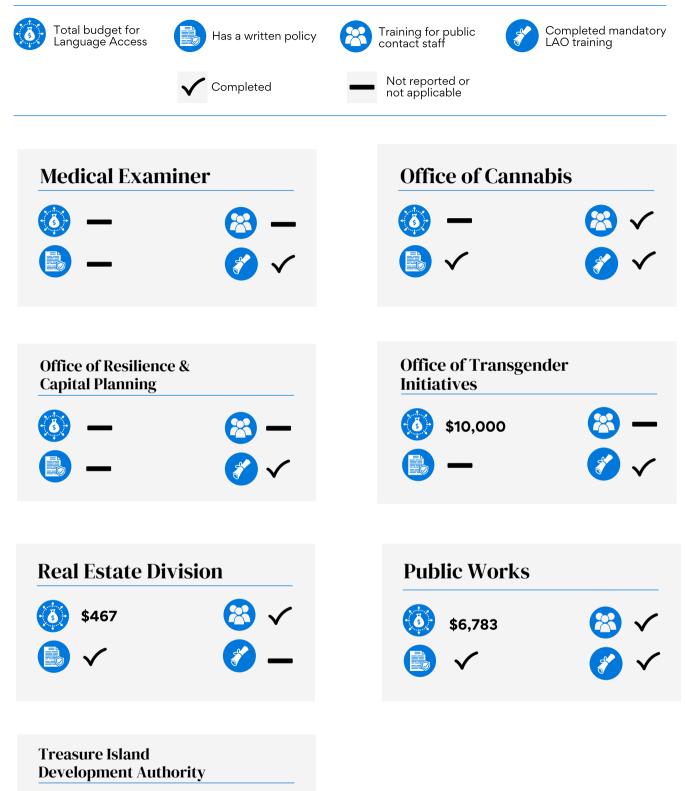


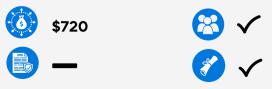
Visit our departmental dashboards online: **bit.ly/laodashboards**

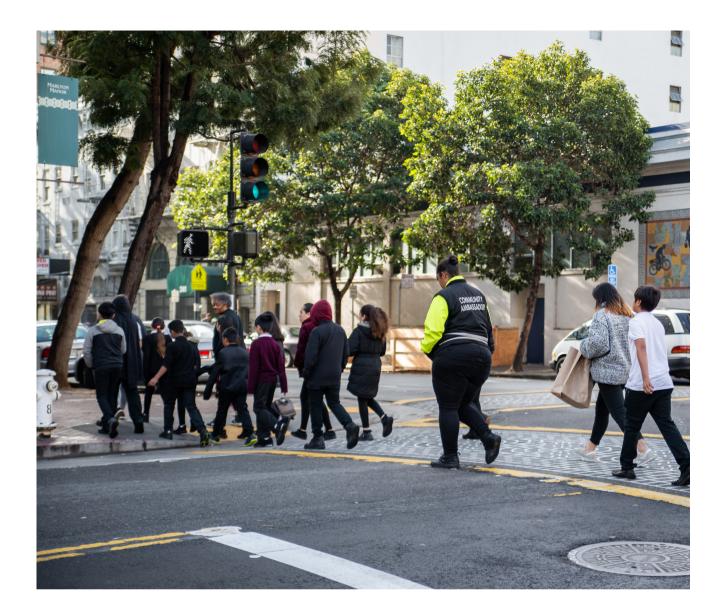
Data on citywide service delivery to LEP clients Departmental data and specific department reports Information on San Francisco's Language Access Ordinance

City Administrator - Divisions









About OCEIA

The Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) is a policy, compliance, direct services, and grantmaking office.

OCEIA's mission is to promote inclusive policies and foster immigrant assistance programs that lead to full civic, economic, and linguistic integration. OCEIA's programs and initiatives include: 2020 Census Grantmaking, Civic Engagement, Community Safety, Integrated Immigrant Services, and Language Access. In addition to overseeing compliance, OCEIA assists City Departments, the Mayor's Office, and the Board of Supervisors to better meet the needs of residents and workers for whom English is not a primary language. These services include trainings, tools, resources and recommendations to increase capacity and provisioning for language access services. On a limited basis, OCEIA's Language Access Unit also provides direct translation and interpretation assistance.



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