


Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: David Vossbrink

SUBJECT: CITY COMMUNICATIONS
AND LANGUAGE ACCESS

DATE: June 1, 2016

Approved  Date 6/1/16

As part of the 2016-2017 Budget Study Session on Wednesday, May 13, 2016, Councilmember Manh Nguyen requested information regarding the City's expenditures related to communications, outreach, and translation services in City departments. This memorandum responds to this inquiry.

Communications Staffing

The City's communications function is decentralized, and operating responsibilities are distributed among the departments. The function can include many activities, such as community outreach, event coordination, marketing programs, media relations, social media management, and web content management. A proxy for the relative amount of expenditures is the staffing level for full-time employees responsible for professional communications. Other City employees in a wide range of classifications, ranging from clerical support to engineers, may also have some communications responsibilities assigned to them, but for the purposes of this memo they are not included in the cost estimates.

Departmental Communications Staffing		
Department/Office	F/T Communications Staff	Approximate Salary Costs
Airport	2	\$200,000
City Manager's Office	5	\$580,000
Environmental Services	7	\$620,000
Office of Economic Development	1	\$120,000
Library	2	\$180,000
Planning, Building and Code Enforcement	2	\$200,000
Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Svcs.	1.5	\$120,000
Fire	1	\$120,000
Police	2	\$230,000
Public Works	1	80,000
Total	24.5	\$2,450,000

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Finally, departments conduct a wide range of outreach activities associated with specific issues, such as stakeholder engagement for policy and ordinance development, land use, budget issues, and similar matters. These activities can include expenditures for advertising, production of printed materials, video and photography, consulting, and related purchases. These expenditures are not included in this memo.

Costs of Translation Services

The City's budget also does not have specific budget line item for outreach to minority communities or for translation services across all departments. These are operational expenses associated with a wide range of programs, and since the City's budget structure does not track specific expenses related to translation services, staff surveyed departments about their communications and translation programs to develop an approximation of expenditures. In general the costs for outreach and translation vary across departments, are spent on widely different uses, and are built into their normal business operations.

External translation services for multiple languages for over-the-phone situations are available to all departments through the AT&T Language Line.

Examples of specific projects identified by the departments where translation services have been used include:

- Auditor - The National Citizen Survey conducted by the National Research Center
- City Manager's Office - Public opinion surveys conducted by CMO include Spanish and Vietnamese versions. The costs of these are included in the overall survey consultant contract.
- Office of Economic Development/work2future - Services for adult and youth job seekers and small businesses, including outreach, flyers, seminars, etc.
- Housing - Significant public outreach related to the Mobile Home Preservation/Conversion and Apartment Rent Ordinance. The department also hosts community participation meetings pertaining to the use of federal grants
- Library - Uses primarily internal staff for the creation of marketing and promotional materials, information about service changes, and meetings
- Fire - permit building inspections and billing inquiries

Examples from the Library Department and the Office of Economic Development describe some of the more targeted efforts. The Library has allocated approximately \$2.1 million in 2015-2016 for eight Literacy Program Specialists who manage the branch "Family Learning Centers" focused on providing additional needs to minority families (\$892,000), books and materials in 11 non-English language categories (\$683,000), and the Library's Partner in Reading & English as a Second Language (ESL) programs (\$519,000). Various branches have bilingual story-times, such as Biblioteca Latinoamericana, Alum Rock and Joyce Ellington Library material such as program advertisements are translated using existing Library employees who are certified as bilingual.

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The Office of Economic Development and the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department (PBCE) run the Small Business Ally program (approximately \$300,000 in 2015-2016), which provides a single point of contact to support small businesses with the City's permitting process with Spanish and Vietnamese-speaking staff. This program's multilingual capacity was recently expanded by adding more translation services and an additional Vietnamese-speaking staff member to further foster the start and growth of small businesses within the immigrant population

Contracted Interpreter Services - \$50,000

The City maintains an Open Purchase Order with Language Line in the amount of \$10,000. Additionally, the Police Department and the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) have their own contracts for interpreter services for approximately \$20,000 total. The Clerk's Office for 2016 to date has spent approximately \$20,000 for interpreter services on behalf of the Mayor's and Council office, including two Council meetings and the State of the City event.

The City's Language Line contract provide the resources to translate many languages. Languages primarily used by the City include: Arabic, Assyrian, Burmese, Cambodian, Cantonese, Croatian, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Hmong, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Internally-Sourced Interpreter Services - \$823,000

All departments have access to more than 600 internal interpreters who are City staff certified as qualified for either oral or written translation in a variety of languages. This program is administered by Human Resources Department, and the list of certified staff is posted on the City's intranet site. Certified employees receive a compensation premium. PRNS, Fire, Library, Housing, Environmental Services, and Office of Economic Development use primarily internal resources to provide programs and materials in various languages.

For example, the Fire Department currently has 126 sworn and 10 non-sworn employees certified for translations that costs an estimated \$308,800 annually. Recently, the Fire Chief and Human Resources have authorized an additional 12 languages for a total of 18 languages to be eligible for bilingual premium pay for sworn employees. The list of languages is as follows: Arabic, Assyrian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Croatian, French, German, Greek, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Cost for Translating and Maintaining the City Website

Web pages for cities are constantly evolving and the content and languages for multiple sites would need to be managed individually to stay current. The City's current web content system management contractor, CivicPlus, does not provide translation of web pages. As a result, the

one-time and ongoing cost for establishing and maintaining parallel websites in other languages could become very costly over time. This effort would require either contract translators for potentially thousands of webpages or adding City staff who would have appropriate language abilities to translate webpages.

Along with most cities and public agencies, San José includes a Google Translate button in the lower left side of each web page, which is a practical and no-cost alternative that is reasonably effective. The Google Translate dropdown menu offers translations into about 90 different languages, and the feature works on all our web pages. However, it does not translate documents that are attached to webpages, such as the thousands of City memos, Council reports, and similar materials in the City system.



A screenshot of the City of San José homepage showing the Google Translate button.

The City is currently near the end of a procurement process for a web content management system since the CivicPlus contract will expire next year. Among the possible features of a new web CMS is translation services for a limited number of high-level pages. Staff will continue to seek cost estimates for this effort, depending on the outcome of the web CMS procurement.

Websites of Other Major Cities

Staff surveyed other major US city websites, including top ten US and California cities, and cities that have large non-English speaking populations including Miami, Seattle, El Paso, and Minneapolis. The only city found to have a parallel website in another language was Chicago, which uses Google Translate to translate top-level pages into Spanish, Polish, and Arabic, but not documents. Houston includes a limited number of top-level Spanish webpages, but the website itself is in English. Please see Attachment A for survey results.

Language Access Policy

The City Manager's Communications Office has also worked with departments to develop a draft Citywide Language Access Policy that is planned to be issued as an administrative in June. The LAP is based on policies and practices of several City departments including Housing, PRNS, and Police, as well as best practices of other cities. The draft policy outlines

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recommendations to departments for including translation services for documents and public outreach when target communities require other-than-English communication for vital services, events, and programs when they serve linguistically isolated communities in San José. The draft also recommends the continued use of the Google Translate feature for language translation of City web pages and includes specific direction to departments to ensure that staff and community members are aware of this feature, as well as the importance of factoring in language accessibility.

/s/

David Vossbrink
Director of Communications

For questions, please contact: David Vossbrink, Director of Communications, at 408-535-8170.

Attachment A: Major U.S. City Websites

Attachment A
Major U.S. City Websites

City	Website	Translated Site?	Which language	Population	Notes
San Francisco	http://sfgov.org/	No	n/a	864,816	Google Translate
Oakland	http://www2.oaklandnet.com/	No	n/a	419,267	Google Translate; Equal Access Office; listing of translated materials; departmental language coordinators
Los Angeles	https://www.lacity.org/	No	n/a	3,971,883	Google Translate
San Diego	https://www.sandiego.gov/	No	n/a	1,394,928	Google Translate
New York	http://www1.nyc.gov/	No	n/a	8,550,405	Google Translate
Chicago	http://www.cityofchicago.org/	Yes	Spanish, Polish, Arabic	2,720,546	Webpage translations by Google Translate
Houston	http://www.houstontx.gov/	Yes	Spanish (limited)	2,296,224	Top level only; No Google Translate
Philadelphia	http://www.phila.gov/	No	n/a	1,567,442	No Google Translate; Language Assistance through Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs
Phoenix	https://www.phoenix.gov/	No	n/a	1,563,025	No Google Translate
San Antonio	https://www.sanantonio.gov/	No	n/a	1,469,845	Google Translate
Dallas	http://dallascityhall.com/	No	n/a	1,300,092	Google Translate
Miami	http://www.miamigov.com/	No	n/a	441,003	Google Translate
Seattle	http://www.seattle.gov/	No	n/a	684,451	No Google Translate
Minneapolis	http://www.minneapolismn.gov/	No	n/a	410,939	Google Translate
El Paso	https://www.elpasotexas.gov/	No	n/a	681,124	No Google Translate