

Language Access Tracking

All city bureaus/service areas need to track every instance of language access provision

Two categories

- Public-initiated requests – a multilingual community member places a request to have language services provided by the city of Portland, at no cost to them, in order to have meaningful, equitable access to city government. This access should be as effective as the access and service provision provided to English-speaking community members.
- City-initiated – A city bureau/service area uses the services of a professional language service provider: interpreter (verbal) or translator (written), or city employee who receives the language pay differential*, to proactively provide access and community engagement/public involvement with multilingual communities who experience language barriers.

Public-initiated = responsive

City-initiated = proactive

Reasons to collect & track language access data

- Compliance - Tracking will demonstrate compliance with Title VI & Executive Order 13166.
- Budgeting - Provides financial data to demonstrate how much budget has been spent on providing equitable access to multilingual communities. It serves as a method by which to project future spending. It is important for decision-making in budgeting and resource allocation.
- Language access plan - Prepares bureaus for language access planning, providing a solid foundation for the process. In 2025, each city bureau/service area will engage in creating their own language access plan, in accordance with Department of Justice (DOJ) specifications. This federally mandated assessment will entail collecting the tracked language access data.
- Types of contact - Tracking language access data means considering and tracking all the multitude of ways the bureau is providing language access: utilizing telephone interpreters, written translation services, receiving public engagement services from the community engagement liaisons group, and other methods such as using professional language access providers to produce informational videos, etc.
- Assessing barriers - Collecting language access data will facilitate assessing any institutional barriers in access to government for linguistically diverse communities, show examples of equitable service provision, and serve as a baseline for evaluation and improvement.

*Note regarding the use of staff who receive the language pay differential:

Instances where these staff provide assistance should also be included in language access data tracked. Same as above, the provision of language assistance falls into the two categories: responding to public-initiated requests or city-initiated efforts to provide access.

Language Pay Differential staff can serve as a language link:

Bilingual/multilingual city employees who receive the language pay differential can serve as a language link or city system navigator while they assist the community member experiencing institutional language barriers. The staff member is not trained as a professional interpreter or translator. The employee can provide spoken assistance because the eligibility test is for verbal proficiency.