

# Translation and Interpretation Needs Assessment

City of Burlington

December 8, 2020

“Whether in an emergency or in the course of routine business matters, the success of government efforts to effectively communicate with members of the public depends on the widespread and nondiscriminatory availability of accurate, timely, and vital information.” - Attorney General Eric Holder, Memorandum to All Federal Agencies Regarding Executive Order 13166, February 17, 2011

## Background

The City of Burlington is conducting this needs assessment to better inform the City’s Language Access Plan (LAP) Policy and Language Assistance Services Guide.

The City of Burlington strives to be a vibrant, diverse, and livable community that fosters innovation, enriches the lives of all its residents, and embraces intentional community engagement. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) including can be a barrier to accessing important City services, understanding and exercising important rights, complying with certain responsibilities, and understanding other information associated required to access with City programs and services. The purpose of the LAP policy is to ensure that the City provides timely meaningful access to City information, programs and services to individuals with limited in their English language proficiency.

Currently, 14.5 percent of the population of the City of Burlington speaks a language other than English at home<sup>1</sup>. That number has risen from 10.4 percent, or by 2,006 individuals, since 2010. Of that population, 39 percent of people self-report that they speak English at a level considered to be “low-English proficient,” a definition which describes an individual as struggling with the ability to speak, read, write or understand English. Included within this demographic category are the 16 percent of Burlington School District students who receive English Language Services in school and who speak 45 different languages at home<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau. (n.d.). American FactFinder - Community Facts. Retrieved December 8, 2020, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=1600000US5010675>

<sup>2</sup> Burlington School District Annual Report 2019. (2020, February 18). Retrieved December, 7, 2020, from [https://www.bsdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BSD\\_AnnualReport\\_2019-for-web-1.pdf](https://www.bsdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BSD_AnnualReport_2019-for-web-1.pdf)

Cultural and language diversity have always existed in Vermont. Within the past few decades however, Burlington's status as a national refugee resettlement site has greatly changed local demographics and redefined the needs of its population. Since 2006, the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program estimates that Burlington has over 85 percent of all refugees resettled in Chittenden County<sup>3</sup>. As the City continues to serve as a refugee resettlement site, the number of foreign born, non-English speaking residents is only expected to grow. In addition, Vermont receives nearly 13 million visitors annually<sup>4</sup>, many of whom come from Quebec. These visitors have their own language service needs and place additional seasonal demands on city services.

The goal of improving equity practices and of disseminating useful information to the non-English speaking population of the City are part of Burlington's Diversity and Equity Strategic Plan. Goal 2 states the City's commitment to promote the inclusion of all community members by providing key service information in multiple languages in print and on the Burlington City website. The LAP would provide guidance on how to create these resources as well as a training plan for city employees to use them effectively.

## Objectives

This needs assessment uses a mixed-methods approach to gather relevant information and recent data on the number of Burlington residents with limited English proficiency (LEP) and the frequency in which translation and interpretation requests are made across city departments. This needs assessment will use desk research, an online survey for city staff, and a series of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in order to determine:

1. The number or proportion of residents with limited English proficiency currently served or encountered in the eligible service population.
2. The frequency with which individuals with limited English proficiency come into contact with the City of Burlington's programs, activities, and services.
3. The nature and importance of various programs, activities or services provided by the City that may require translation and interpretation services in order to effectively serve Burlington residents, stakeholders and visitors.
4. The estimated costs required to provide streamline translation and interpretation services across all City Departments

## Methodology

Insert more detail here about mix-methods research approach...but essentially there are four data collection methods proposed and the hope is that these will be completed by end of March latest to inform FY22 budgets.

1. Desk Research

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants of Vermont (2020) "USCRI Vermont Database of Arrivals" [Unpublished raw data] Retrieved December 8, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Tourism in Vermont. (n.d.). Retrieved December 7, 2020, from <https://accd.vermont.gov/tourism>

2. General Inquiries (Email or in-person Interviews with key representatives from each Department]
3. Staff survey
4. 3 Focus Group discussions

## Desk Research

Some of the information needed to inform the LAP Policy and Implementation Guide will be best collected using secondary data such as the U.S. Census, VT State, BSD and other agencies. Below are a list of questions that will guide desk research as well as a table with key stakeholders we will be reaching out to during this Needs Assessment period (December-April) to gather as much relevant information as possible to inform the LAP.

### Questions

1. What is the current population of persons/HH with limited English proficiency in Burlington? How have these numbers been shifting over the last 5-10 years?
2. For Departments providing essential and emergency services: Data on which languages are most frequently requested for live translation services (eg. fire, police, BSD).
3. For the City Attorney’s Office - What are the “Vital Documents” we would be mandated by law to translate if we met certain population thresholds?
4. How can we incorporate those that are deaf or hard of hearing, or blind – should that be captured under our LAP as well (American Sign Language)?
5. How can we learn from what others are doing (eg. does [UVM Medical Center](#) or other agencies operating in Burlington have a LAP? Can they offer advice or best practices when it comes to translation/interpretation service providers?
6. For Human Resources – Can we track the number of staff in each department with limited English proficiency or need for language assistance services (eg. deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired)?
  - a. What specific needs do they have?
  - b. Are they feeling integrated, supported?
  - c. Do supervisors foresee any specific challenges in communicating with these staff (to provide instruction, feedback, support, etc).
7. For Human Resources - What City staff are proficient in a foreign language that might be called upon for interpretation and translation needs?

### Outreach to Key Stakeholders

Resource Organizations/Persons	Notes
Director, Refugee Office   State Refugee Coordinator Vermont Agency of Human Services   Office of the Secretary	
Coordinator of Translation Services at UVM Medical Center	
Burlington School District Multi-Lingual Liaisons and Data Coordinator	

AALV	
USCRI VT	
VNAAC	
? Many More Suggestions	

## General Inquiries [Email or in-Person interviews with a representative from each Department]

1. How does your department budget for translation services (is there a specific line item or billing code)?
2. How much has your department spent on translation services over the last 3 fiscal years?
3. What translation services is your department already using?
  - a. When are these services accessed (under which circumstances)?
  - b. What are existing contracts (contractor, value, duration/expiration)?
    - i. Level of satisfaction with this contractor/vendor
4. How do you inform members of the public about the availability of language assistance services? (Select all that apply)
  - Customer Service and outreach multilingual staff
  - Posters in public areas
  - "I Speak" language identification cards distributed to Customer Service staff
  - Website
  - Social networking website (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
  - E-mail to individuals or a list serve
  - Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of the above
5. Does your department have partnerships with community groups to inform individuals about the availability of free language assistance services?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Does your department inform individuals about the availability of language assistance services?
  - Yes
  - No

7. Do you have staff members in your department with limited English proficiency or need for language assistance services?

- Yes
- No

If yes...

- i. Do you think they are they feeling integrated, supported? \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Do supervisors have any specific challenges in communicating with these staff (to provide instruction, feedback, support, etc.).\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you currently provide interpretation services?

- Yes
- No

If yes, for what types of events or interactions? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you currently use taglines to indicate that language assistance services are available?

- Yes
- No

If yes - Please provide a list of what documents where taglines are used: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Who receives staff training on working with individuals with limited English proficiency within your department?

(Select all that apply)

- Management or senior staff
- Employees who interact with or are responsible for interactions with non-English speakers or individuals needing language assistance services?
- Bilingual Staff
- New employees
- All employees
- Volunteers
- Others (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

11. Does your department receive federal funding? If so, from what sources?

12. Do you currently have any translated documents?

- Yes
- No

If yes - Please provide a list of what documents are currently available in a language other than English: \_\_\_\_\_

13. What are the "Vital Documents" in your department that you would like to have translated?

- a. List and/or upload each document (how often is it updated?)

## Customer Service Staff Survey

This survey is an assessment of the demand for and current levels of service for interpretation and translation services across City of Burlington Departments. Information from this survey will be used to create a recommended Language Access Plan (LAP) Policy on how to appropriately receive and respond to the needs of low-English proficiency and non-English Speakers in our community as well as individuals with sensory impairments (SI), who are Deaf or hard of hearing and communicate using American Sign Language (ASL), have speech impairments, or that are blind or have visual impairments.

### Glossary of Useful Terms

- Customer Service staff: Employees that work directly with customers.
- Interpretation: The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning.
- “I Speak” Cards: Language identification flashcard available to establish interpretive service needs
- Language Assistance Services: May include but are not limited to; 01) oral and written language services, including interpretation in non-English languages provided in person or remotely by a qualified interpreter for an individual with limited English proficiency; 2) written translation, performed by a qualified translator, or written content in paper or electronic form into languages other than the English; and 3) taglines
- Limited English Proficient (LEP): Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. This definition includes individuals with sensory impairments (SI), who are Deaf or hard of hearing and communicate using American Sign Language (ASL), have speech impairments, or that are blind or have visual impairments. LEP individuals may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still be LEP for other purposes (e.g., reading or writing).
- Multilingual staff or employee – A staff person or employee who has demonstrated proficiency in English and reading, writing, speaking, or understanding at least one other language as authorized by his or her component.
- Primary Language: An individual’s primary language is the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.
- Professional Interpreter: A person, who is qualified, trained and who performs interpretation services, under contract or employed by the City of Burlington. The interpreter provides services based on knowledge and comprehension of spoken message that are then re-expressed accurately and objectively in another language or the person of conveying information related to city programs, policies, procedures, or the provision of services.

- Translation: The replacement of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).
- Taglines: short statements written in non-English languages that indicate the availability of language assistance services free of charge.
- Vital Document: Paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for accessing a department's program or activities, or is required by law

## QUESTIONS

1. How do you inform members of the public about the availability of language assistance services? (Select all that apply)

- Customer Service and outreach multilingual staff
- Posters in public areas
- "I Speak" language identification cards distributed to Customer Service staff
- Website
- Social networking website (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
- E-mail to individuals or a list serve
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

2. Does your department have partnerships with community groups to inform individuals about the availability of free language assistance services?

- Yes
- No

Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Does your department inform individuals about the availability of language assistance services?

- Yes
- No

## Customer Service Language Assistance Services

4. Do bilingual or multilingual staff provide interpretation for people with limited English proficiency?

- Yes, frequently
- Yes, sometimes
- No

5. Do you allow family members to interpret for the individuals with limited English proficiency?

- Yes, frequently
- Yes, sometimes
- No

6. How does your department identify people in need of language assistance services? (Select all that apply)

- Assume limited English proficiency if communication seems impaired
- Respond to individual requests for language assistance services
- Self-identification by the individual needed language assistance
- Ask open-ended questions to determine language proficiency on the telephone or in person
- Use of "I Speak" language identification cards or posters
- Based on written material submitted to the Department (e.g. complaints, application forms)
- We have not identified non English speakers or individuals in need of language assistance services
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Please describe the manner in which you interact with the public: (Select all that apply)

- In-Person
- By Telephone
- Electronically (e.g. email or website)
- Via Written Correspondence
- Other: (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

8. Does your department provide staff with a list of available interpreters or information on how to access qualified interpreters?

- Yes
- No

9. What types of language assistance services does your Department provide? (Select all that apply)

- Bilingual staff
- In-house interpreters (oral)
- In-house translators (documents)
- Contracted interpreters
- Contracted service for interpreters
- Contracted service for translators
- Interpreters or translators borrowed from another department or organization



(please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

- Volunteer interpreters or translators
- Telephone interpretation services
- Video Remote Interpretation services
- Services for peoples with disabilities
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

10. Which vital written documents has your department translated into non-English languages?

Please list the documents and available languages if applicable:

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### Staff Training

11. Did you receive initial training on how to access and provide language assistance services?

- Yes
- No

13. Does your department have a procedural manual or handbook include specific instructions related to providing language assistance services?

- Yes
- No

15. Do qualified staff have the opportunity to serve as translators within your department?

- Yes
- No

### Data Monitoring & Tracking

17. Does your Department currently have a system in place for tracking the frequency and type of language assistance services it provides at each interaction?

- Yes
- No

18. What data, if any, do you collect regarding language assistance services? (Select all that apply)

- Primary language of persons encountered or served

- Use of language assistance services such as interpreters and translators
- Funds or staff time spent on language assistance services
- Number of bilingual staff
- Cost of interpreter services
- Cost of translation of materials into non-English languages
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

19. Does your department have a system to track the cost of language assistance services?

- Yes
- No

21. What non-English languages do you encounter most often? If you do not have specific data on this, please answer to your best ability.

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## Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Group	Objectives	Person Responsible (timeline)
All-City Communications Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Gather feedback on draft LAP</li> <li>2) Feedback on translation and interpretation needs assessment for staff (survey)</li> </ol>	January
Effected Community Members – English Language Learners  (small group of ELL members of community)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What types of encounters have people with limited English proficiency had with City Departments?</li> <li>2) What types of information would be most helpful to have access to language assistance services?</li> <li>3) What are the challenges people with limited English proficiency experience when accessing City services?</li> </ol>	February
Support Organizations – New American and ELL services providers, deaf and blind advocates  (Family Room, AALV Vermont Adult Learning, BHS ELL, Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services, others?)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Better understand the challenges people with limited English proficiency experience when accessing City services</li> <li>2) Gather input on the types of meetings and programs that would most beneficial if LA services were provided.</li> <li>3) Gather input on the types of vital documents that would be most helpful to have available in languages other than English</li> </ol>	February