Statement of Legislative Intent Response: Interpretation and Translation

City Council

8/17/11

Background

The City:

- Conducted a needs assessment and launched the Immigrant and Refugee Action Plan in 2007.

- Has developed tools and resources to strengthen engagement with immigrant and refugee communities.

- Established the Immigrant and Refugee Commission in 2008.

- Transferred responsibility for the Action Plan and Commission to SOCR in 2011.

- Has worked to better integrate immigrant and refugee efforts with RSJI.

Process for developing SLI response

• Interdepartmental team convened, co-chaired by RSJI Core Team members Michael Davis and Desiree Tabares.

• Sub-committees formed on each topic area.

• Best practices identified from across the country.

• Data analyzed.

• Focus groups held with immigrant and refugee community members and the Commission.

• Report drafted based on all this input.

A. Overall – findings

- Interpretation and translation is sometimes conducted in a perfunctory manner, as opposed to a means to an end.

- Is often uncoordinated and ad hoc.

- Early focus was too much on translation; interpretation can be more helpful.

- Efforts can sometimes increase isolation, as opposed to strengthening community connections.

A. Overall recommendations

1. Improve use of existing tools and resources to support the Immigrant and Refugee and Race and Social Justice Initiatives.

2. Increase coordination between departments.

3. Build relationships between "welcoming" communities and immigrant and refugee communities

4. Integrate translation and interpretation with broader strategies for immigrant and refugee engagement.

5. Improve organization and infrastructure of Immigrant and Refugee and IOPE Interdepartmental Team.

B. Performance Measures – findings

- Best practices include more effective access to services, meaningful on-going engagement, and translated web sites.

- City spending on translation and interpretation was $382k in 2010. HSD and SPU were responsible for more than two-thirds of this.

- Approximately 17% of Seattle residents are immigrants or refugees. Most common languages interpreted are Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Somali and Korean. It is difficult to get good data.

B. Performance Measures – recommendations

1. Train managers on IOPE and immigrant and refugee access to services.

2. Track community demographics.

3. Collect better demographic data on participants in City programs.

RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

**ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY.
ACHIEVE EQUITY.**

C. Employee Language Bank – findings

- Lacks coordination and support.

- Participant's language skills have not been assessed or monitored.

- Lack of clarity as to when and how employees can use ELB staff.

- Informal networks exist to make use of employee language skills.

C. Employee Language Bank – recommendations

1. Improve ELB coordination, quality and consistency.

2. Establish ELB policies.

3. Reward and recognize ELB volunteers.

4. Develop metrics to monitor and improve the effectiveness of the ELB.

5. Provide infrastructure tools to support the ELB.

D. Community Partnerships – findings

- Community based organizations (CBOs) prefer to engage on specific projects where interpretation is tied to broad, shared goals.

- Some departments have better ability to compensate CBOs on community engagement (some departments lack any funding).

- The City has achieved better outreach and engagement results when working in partnership with the community and CBOs.

D. Community Partnerships – recommendations

1. Continue to build partnerships with immigrant and refugee community based organizations and other institutions working with immigrant and refugee communities, including compensation of community based organizations.

2. Communicate interpretation and translation policies more broadly.

3. Utilize the expertise of the Immigrant and Refugee Commission.

E. City-wide Practices – findings

- Coordination, training and technical assistance for interpretation and translation is lacking.

- Larger departments have greater capacity.

- Policies need to be updated to provide greater flexibility.

- Interpretation and translation data is not currently tracked to determine effectiveness of efforts.

E. City-wide Practices – recommendations

1. Update the Translation and Interpretation Policy to allow greater flexibility.

2. Develop policies to increase hiring of multilingual staff.

3. Identify and use technology tools to help improve access.

4. Launch collaborative neighborhood-based approaches to increase access to services for immigrants and refugees.

5. Continue to integrate immigrant and refugee access to services with RSJI.

Next steps / moving forward:

We have already begun to:

- Integrate interpretation and translation efforts with Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement and RSJI.

- Combine a number of interdepartmental teams into one.

- Strengthen use of existing tools and resources.

- Better utilize the expertise of the Immigrant and Refugee Commission.

Next steps / moving forward:

Many recommendations are exciting, but would require additional funding, such as:

- ✓ Additional staffing for coordination and technical assistance across departments.
- ✓ Additional staffing to develop policy and programs to support the economic and social development of immigrants and refugees.
- ✓ A community partnership fund to strengthen outreach and engagement with immigrant and refugee CBOs.

For more information:

Immigrant and refugee access to services
http://inweb/rsji/IandR.htm

Interpretation and translation policies and resources
http://inweb/language/default.htm

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