

Budget Condition Response

Communications Plan Pilot Project. Council has appropriated \$50,000 in the 2022 Legislative budget for the purpose of developing a Communications Plan and to work to incorporate language translation services to Council communications, including meetings, newsletters, Council website, etc. Prior to expenditure of these funds, Council will develop a pilot project by April 30th to determine and address the translation needs of Council.

An assessment has been completed regarding the scope and cost of translation services. The most commonly used languages in Snohomish County are: English, Spanish (6.95%), Tagalog including Filipino (1.77%), and Chinese (1.70%). Staff assessed alternatives to improve accessible accommodations for the hearing impaired. The following were methods identified and estimated costs:

1. Staff assessed alternatives to improve accessibility. The following are evaluated:
 - a. Closed captioning for Zoom meetings. There are limitations in the accuracy of automated closed captioning.
 - b. ASL for remote meetings.
 - c. Headsets in Chambers.
2. Written translation services. The following were evaluated:
 - a. Automated written translations. There are limitations in the accuracy of automated written translations.
 - i. Auto closed captioning translation for Zoom meetings
 - ii. MS Word has the ability to translate documents.
 - iii. County website pages can be translated through Google Translate.
 - iv. There is not an automated process identified for PDFs or material in Legistar – translation of these documents would occur before reformatting to PDF or uploading into Legistar (e.g. through MS Word)
 - b. Custom Translation by a Person. These are more accurate than automated written translations. Cost is approximately \$0.08 per word and varies according to content and language translated.
3. Spoken translation services. These involve custom translation by a person and may involve transmitting text to be translated in advance of the meeting and/or simultaneous translation during a meeting.
 - a. Translation for remote meetings exceeds \$100 per hour and varies according to language and other criteria.
 - b. Translation for in person meetings exceeds \$100 per hour and varies according to language, travel/mileage costs, and other criteria.

An assessment has been completed regarding the scope of a communications plan. There was interest in enhancing communications in the following ways with the following estimated costs:

1. Communication method.
 - a. Mail. Residential only mailings were considered in this evaluation. Costs below are based on a single page, double-sided.
 - i. Countywide:
 1. Postage alone is approximately \$60,000
 2. One mailer, including postage: black and white is about \$83,000 and color is about \$156,000
 - ii. By district

1. District 1: black and white is about \$17,000 and color is about \$32,000
 2. District 2: black and white is about \$21,000 and color is about \$40,000
 3. District 3: black and white is about \$10,000 and color is about \$19,000
 4. District 4: black and white is about \$18,000 and color is about \$35,000
 5. District 5: black and white is about \$16,000 and color is about \$30,000
- b. Email
- i. This is a low-cost option
 - ii. Translations can be done to improve newsletters – see above
 1. Newsletters can reside on a county website with newsletters in English and other languages
 2. Newsletters could be in email in English and reside on county website with links to other Languages in the email that is sent
- c. Robocalls
- i. Cost is approximately \$1,800 to phone 100,000 phone numbers
 - ii. There is an option to pay \$0.055 per successful contact to each mobile number
 - iii. Using the contractor’s list would cost about \$7,300, which would be added to the above costs
- d. Social Media. In addition to posting on social media, there are options to pay a fee to “boost” or expand the “reach” of a post on social media. Cost can vary from \$5 to a couple hundred dollars per post.
- e. Town Halls
- i. Zoom
 1. Council Office already pays for Zoom
 2. Primary cost would be one of resources, such as cost, if any, associated with Council personnel providing support for the meeting
 - ii. Telephone only
 1. Data was not collected regarding the cost of a telephone only town hall format – Zoom could be used in lieu of a telephone/call in only option.
 2. Costs if via Zoom with a phone focus would be same as Zoom above
 - iii. In Person
 1. Costs vary according to venue
 2. Other costs would include cost of Council personnel resources, mileage, etc.

In discussing the above information with interested parties, there was a recognition that translation services are available to the public through translation functions online (e.g. google translate and similar functions in MS Edge or Google Chrome). While this is available, there are some limitations specific to PDFes, which Legistar uses for agendas, staff reports, etc. Additional work could be done in coordination with the Executive’s Office to identify and develop other automated translation opportunities.

Further in discussing the above, there was a recognition that different Council Offices might have different approaches to expand public outreach and, further, that costs with some of those options could vary (e.g. cost of mailing is different in each district). **At this time, a request has not been made to implement a communications plan for 2022.**