



IMPROVING VOTING ACCESS THROUGH LANGUAGE SERVICES

Snohomish County Auditor's Office

March 20, 2024



Snohomish County

Introduction

Voting is a fundamental right of citizens.

Not all citizens speak English as their primary and preferred language.

Some voters face challenges understanding voting information and instructions and could benefit from having voting information in their preferred language.

During the Fall 2023 budget process, the Council established a goal to support our Spanish speaking voters in their ability to cast informed, independent ballots.

Auditor's Office supports this goal and is prepared to do so with additional resources.



Washington counties providing language services for elections

County	Languages
Adams	Spanish
Franklin	Spanish
King	Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Somali
Pierce	Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese
Yakima	Spanish

as of January 2024



VOTER EXPECTATIONS WHEN RECEIVING SERVICES IN LANGUAGE

Voter registration process

- Forms, confirmation cards, notices in language, website information
- Customer service support in language

Elections process

- Ballots, instructions, voters' pamphlets, curing forms, website information
- Customer service support in language

Information about upcoming elections and changes

- Outreach materials and efforts in language

Accurate, timely, sustained,
culturally competent services

Best practice in language services

- Staff support (1-2 people per language)
 - Language skills
 - Coordination, translation and translation review, customer service, outreach
- Utilize certified translation services proofed by in-house staff and community review
- Ensure in language support during peak translation times and election customer service periods
- Perform outreach to ensure services are known and utilized by the community
 - Building community partnerships
 - Advertising in effective places

Note: Each year the Snohomish County Auditor's Office administers four elections throughout the year.



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Proposed Program Costs

Item	Cost	Comment
One (1) Election and Voter Outreach Specialist FTE (salary + benefits)	\$102,000	The new bilingual employee of the Auditor's Office would be responsible for providing all services in the new language, including translating ballots, voting, and outreach materials; providing customer service in-language; coordinating with community partners, and working with local language media.
Bilingual Premium Pay	\$1,200	Per AFSCME Master Agreement, \$100 per month for certified translators that use their language skills.
Temporary staff	\$25,000	During peak translation periods or high customer traffic periods, the Auditor's Office would need to bring in seasonal bilingual support to meet statutory deadlines or customer service demands.



Proposed Program Costs (cont.)

Item	Cost	Comment
Overtime	\$4,410	During peak translation periods, translators often work evenings and weekends to ensure everything gets done ahead of statutory deadlines.
Technology support	\$8,277	In addition to regular IT costs for an FTE, professional translation requires a variety of technical programs and tools like InDesign.
Advertising	\$2,500	It is critical that voter education and outreach in language is performed to ensure voters understand language services are available and utilize them.
Printing, Insertion & Postage	\$10,000	While English voters' pamphlets are mailed general delivery (meaning one to every household), language voters would be mailed voters' pamphlets individually.



Proposed Program Costs (cont.)

Item	Cost	Comment
Translation Services	\$30,000	Translation services through third party vendors.
Total Cost	\$183,387	
Council appropriated to Auditor's Office budget for 2024	\$30,000	
Gap in funding	(\$153,387)	

Note: Majority of program costs would be recoverable through voter registration and elections cost recovery allowances.

Next steps

1

Clarify the
commitment from
Council

2

Determine
appropriations
process

3

Draft appropriate
Council legislation

Roll out is dependent on recruiting and hiring a qualified candidate
– estimate 6 months from budget and FTE approval



Snohomish County

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS

Snohomish County

Language Minority Demographics

Language Group	Population	Voting Age Citizens with Limited English Proficiency (VACLEP)	% of VACLEP to Total Voting Eligible Population
Hispanic (Spanish)	81,500	4,193	0.7%
Vietnamese	12,980	3,519	0.6%
Korean	14,280	3,114	0.6%
Chinese	17,190	2,400	0.4%
Filipino	22,520	1,865	0.3%

Sources: 2020 Census