

# LAO Overview and 2024 Language Access Compliance Summary Report

*Presentation to the San Francisco  
Police Commission*

March 20, 2024

**OCEIA** SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE OF  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
& IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS





# About OCEIA

The Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) is a policy, compliance, direct services and grantmaking City department.

OCEIA's mission is to promote inclusive policies and foster immigrant assistance programs that lead to full civic, economic and linguistic integration.

# Frequently Used Terms

## LAO - Language Access Ordinance

Administrative Code, Section 91, directs City agencies to ensure that public services and information are accessible to all people, regardless of language ability.

## LEP - Limited English Proficient

Term used to refer to people who do not speak English as a primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

## San Francisco's Required Languages

The LAO requires City departments to provide language access services in Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino. Languages are certified by OCEIA once they reach a population threshold of 10,000 LEP residents.

# Brief LAO Overview

- ✓ Inform LEP individuals of their right to request services
- ✓ Utilize sufficient bilingual employees
- ✓ Have recorded telephone messages in all required languages
- ✓ Public meetings and hearings
  - Interpretation services must be provided if requested 48 hours in advance
  - Translate agendas, minutes, & notices upon request

# Reporting Background

Under the LAO, public-facing City departments must collect data about their language access activities and submit an **annual compliance report** to OCEIA by October 1.

- Departmental goals
- Barriers and proposed solutions
- Key data points:
  - Total LEP client interactions by language
  - Total number of telephonic interpretations, in-person interpretations, and documents translated
  - Roster of bilingual staff
  - Budget for language access

# 2024 Compliance Summary Report



Report available to view at  
[sf.gov/languageaccess](https://sf.gov/languageaccess)

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

This report is dedicated to the many diverse immigrant communities that call San Francisco home and the languages that they speak.

The annual Language Access Compliance Summary Report evaluates Citywide compliance and progress with the San Francisco Language Access Ordinance (LAO). As required by the LAO, the annual report is submitted to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission by February 1 of each year. This year's report covers Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023).

In addition to overseeing compliance, the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) assists City departments to better meet the language needs of San Francisco's Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents and workers. These services include trainings, tools, resources, and technical assistance to increase capacity and provisioning for language access. On a limited basis, OCEIA's Language Access Unit also provides language assistance during public meetings to support the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and Immigrant Rights Commission.

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# Report Summary

## REPORT SUMMARY

### Language Access Mandates and Local Ordinance Overview

Language justice in the United States is advanced through many intersecting federal, state, and local laws and policies. The Department of Justice has engaged in efforts over the past couple of years to remind agencies of their obligations to provide meaningful access to information and services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals and build upon the federal foundations of language access policy to support agencies in improving compliance.

### Federal Language Access Updates

The primary sources of federal language access protections are [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) and [Executive Order 13166](#). Title VI applies to federal agencies and agencies that receive federal funding; it prohibits discrimination in the protected categories of race, color, and national origin. In the landmark civil rights case *Lau v. Nichols*, the Supreme Court held in 1974 that “Title VI prohibits conduct that has a disproportionate effect on LEP persons because such conduct constitutes national-origin discrimination.”<sup>1</sup> Signed by President Clinton in 2000, Executive Order 13166 “requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them.”<sup>2</sup> Over the years, the Department of Justice has issued a series of guidance memoranda to help federal agencies understand their responsibilities under Title VI and Executive Order 13166.

The federal government recently reached the one-year anniversary of the publication of a landmark Department of Justice memorandum reaffirming federal commitment to language access. On November 21, 2022, Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a memo urging federal agencies to strengthen their engagement with LEP individuals by reviewing their language access practices and policies.<sup>3</sup> Building on the requirements of Executive

<sup>1</sup> Policy Guidance to Federal Funding Recipients, “[Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons](#),” issued on June 19, 2002 by the Department of Justice.

<sup>2</sup> Civil Rights Division, Department of Justice, “[Question of Executive Order 13166](#).”

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum for Heads of Federal Agencies, Heads of Civil Rights Offices, and General Counsels, “[Strengthening the Federal Government’s Commitment to Language Access](#),” issued on November 21, 2022 by the Office of the Attorney General.

- Federal Language Access Updates
- State Laws and Policies that Impact Language Access
- San Francisco Language Access Ordinance
- Department Compliance Reporting Process
- Language Access Complaint Section
- Report Preview

# Report Summary

CITY DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES	OCEIA RESPONSIBILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Designate a language access liaison</li><li>• Develop, adopt, and implement a Department-specific language access policy</li><li>• Submit annual language access activity data through compliance reporting <sup>11</sup></li><li>• Coordinate and provision for language services</li><li>• Determine and budget for Departmental language needs</li><li>• Comply with all requirements of the LAO</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Train Departments on LAO compliance and reporting requirements</li><li>• Develop guidance tools, style guides, and resources on best practices to assist Departments with implementation</li><li>• Identify language services vendors and coordinate Citywide contracting with the Office of Contract Administration</li><li>• Provide language access consultations and technical assistance to Departments</li><li>• Monitor and report compliance to the Immigrant Rights Commission and the Board of Supervisors</li></ul>

# Report Summary

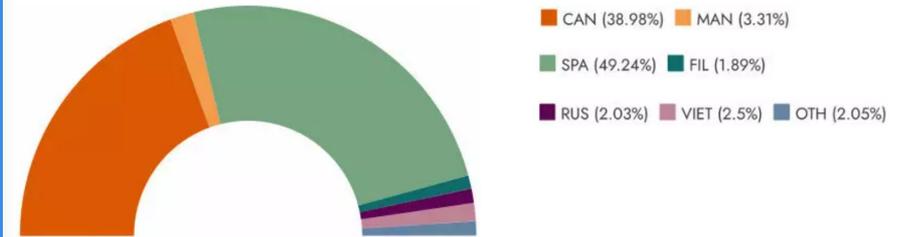
THRESHOLD LANGUAGES	EMERGING LANGUAGES
<p>Departments are required to translate vital information into the threshold languages.</p> <p><b>The three threshold languages are currently Spanish, Chinese, and Filipino.</b></p> <p>Under the LAO, a “threshold language” in San Francisco is a language population that has at least 10,000 or more Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons.<sup>12</sup></p>	<p>Departments are encouraged to translate information for Emerging Language Populations.</p> <p>The LAO defines “Emerging Language Populations” as language populations that comprise at least 2.5% but less than 5% of San Francisco’s population and use a Department’s services, or at least 5,000 but fewer than 10,000 city residents, who speak a shared language other than English.<sup>13</sup></p>

# Findings

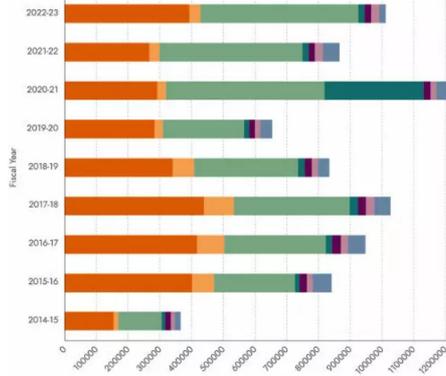
## Increases

- Use of Intake Method of Data Collection
- Total LEP Client Interactions
- Translated Materials
- In-person Interpretations

Total LEP Client Interactions by Language



Total LEP Client Interactions by Language, Over Time



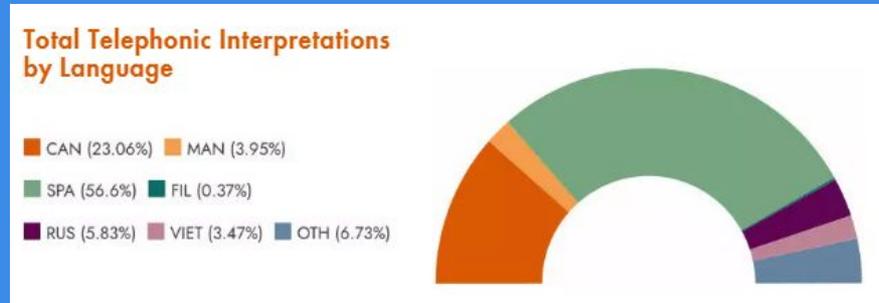
Total Translated Materials by Language



# Findings

## Decreases

- Telephonic Interpretations
- Bilingual Staff
- Language Services Budgets

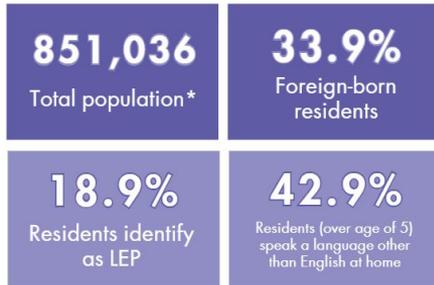


# Snapshot of SF and District Data

## Snapshot of San Francisco

1 in 3 San Francisco residents is an immigrant.

With **33.9%** of its residents born outside of the U.S., San Francisco remains one of the most **culturally and linguistically diverse cities** in the country.



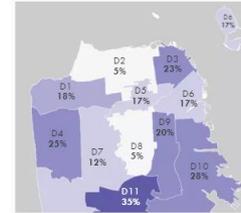
**40+**  
Languages spoken in San Francisco\*\*

\* United States Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey

\*\* These estimated numbers represent a departure from previous reports due to a change in how the United States Census Bureau categorizes and codes language data. In 2016, the code list was revised to match the ISO-639-3 standard. The Census Bureau also reports that the ACS estimates are samples of the total population and there may be languages spoken that are not recorded. A detailed list and explanation of how the Census Bureau defines and uses language coding and tabulation are available [here](#).

## District Data

San Francisco's Supervisorial Districts, from the highest to lowest percent LEP population



Source: United States Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey

District	Total Population	LEP Population	% LEP
11	82,911	28,796	35%
10	71,994	19,972	28%
4	75,082	18,746	25%
3	73,064	16,917	23%
9	79,916	16,036	20%
1	72,305	12,942	18%
5	85,921	14,463	17%
6	59,037	9,961	17%
7	78,432	9,778	12%
2	62,541	2,990	5%
8	73,306	3,303	5%

# Recommendations

## Language Access Capacity-Building

- Increase Department-specific language access instruction and training for public-facing City staff.

## Resource Planning

- Hire and retain more bilingual staff to ensure sufficient internal resources for addressing the needs of LEP community members served by City Departments.
- Explore future opportunities to supplement language access activities with new tools and emerging technologies.

## Language Services Budgets

- Increase Department language services budgets and support for community partners serving LEP individuals.

## Data Collection and Analysis

- Continue improvement of current compliance data collection processes, track language access activities consistently, and refine multiple data sources for a more diverse data landscape.

# Stay connected with us:

## Additional questions?

- Email [language.access@sfgov.org](mailto:language.access@sfgov.org)
- Or call OCEIA at 415-581-2360

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