

ORDINANCE NO. C36630

An ordinance relating to language access and the recruitment of bilingual and multilingual applicants to the City of Spokane, and amending Section 18.11.050 of the Spokane Municipal Code.

WHEREAS, nearly 8% of Spokane residents reported speaking a language other than English at home; and

WHEREAS, Spokane Public Schools (SPS) estimates students throughout the school district represent nearly 80 different languages; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, the City Council adopted Ordinance C36449, which requires City departments to establish a language access program, including identifying vital government documents for regular translation and interpretation services for municipal proceedings; and

WHEREAS, the growing number of Spokane residents speaking a language other than English, combined with the requirement to create a Language Access Program for municipal operations, creates a need for more bilingual/multilingual persons employed by the City of Spokane, especially in divisions with high public interaction; and

WHEREAS, in 2024 the Washington State Legislature enacted SB 6157, which allows public employers to provide additional credit or points to a passing examination to applicants who have full professional proficiency or are completely fluent as a native speaker in one or more languages other than English; and

WHEREAS, the City of Spokane wishes to implement the provisions of SB 6157 and adopt it as the official hiring practice of the City.

NOW, THEREFORE, the City of Spokane does ordain:

Section 1. That section 18.11.050 of the Spokane Municipal Code is amended to read as follows:

Section 18.11.050 Scope, Implementation and Milestones

- A. Except where earlier timelines are specified in this section or unless expressly exempted by SMC 18.11.070, all City departments shall have an implemented Language Access Program in place no later than January 1, 2026.

1. As soon as practical after the effective date of this ordinance, the City Council and Planning Department shall henceforth incorporate language access into any adopted departmental operating procedures.
 2. No later than July 1, 2024, each affected city department shall identify those Vital Documents and Public Communication Materials it intends to include within the scope of its departmental LAP.
 3. Commencing with the 2025 Annual Budget of the City, all affected departments shall include LAP planning as a line-item appropriation within any proposed departmental budget, which planning shall be consistent with the scope of its Vital Documents and Public Communication Materials identified pursuant to subsection 2 above.
 4. Commencing with the 2026 Annual Budget of the City, all affected departments shall incorporate Language Access implementation as a line-item appropriation within any proposed departmental budget.
 5. Commencing January 1, 2026, all departmental operating procedures shall be compliant with this Chapter.
- B. Subject to allocated funding, the following milestones shall apply to specific operations and functions within the City of Spokane:
1. As soon as practical after the effective date of this ordinance, the City Council shall have drafted and implemented a Language Access Plan that assumes (a) translation of council-generated Public Communication Materials, which may include council ordinances, resolutions, proclamations, salutations, and further which may also include standing committee and subcommittee meeting agendas and materials; and (b) translation and/or interpretation services for council legislative sessions, briefing sessions, and standing committee meetings.
 2. As soon as practical after the effective date of this ordinance, the Division of Information Technology shall have drafted and implemented a limited Language Access Plan that assumes translation of digital Public Communication Materials, including but not limited to the City's official website and social media.

3. The timelines in sections A and B above may be adjusted as necessary to comply with the procurement requirements and procedures in SMC 07.06.

C. Consistent with state law and to achieve the goals of this section, the City shall establish policies and procedures that attract, recruit, and effectively utilize City of Spokane employees who possess certified translation or interpretation skills, professional fluency or are a native speaker in one or more languages other than English, thereby ensuring their skills are strategically leveraged by the City to meet the needs of the community.

D. Nothing in this section shall affect, modify, or amend any collective bargaining agreement or Civil Service rule that exists on the effective date of this section.

~~((G))~~ E. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to prevent a department from developing and implementing a multi-year, phased LAP, so long as meaningful implementation begins no later than January 1, 2026.

Section 2. Severability. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or word of this ordinance should be held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity or unconstitutionality thereof shall not affect the validity or constitutionality of any other section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or word of this ordinance.

Section 3. Clerical Errors. Upon approval by the city attorney, the city clerk is authorized to make necessary corrections to this ordinance, including scrivener's errors or clerical mistakes; references to other local, state, or federal laws, rules, or regulations; or numbering or referencing of ordinances or their sections and subsections.

PASSED by the City Council on February 10, 2025.


Council President

Attest:

Approved as to form:

Geri Roberts

[Signature]

City Clerk

City Attorney

Lisa Brown
Mayor

2/17/2025
Date

3/19/2025
Effective Date

