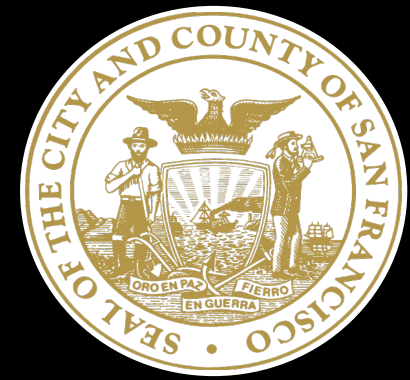


OCEIA SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE OF
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
& IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS



Language Access Compliance in San Francisco

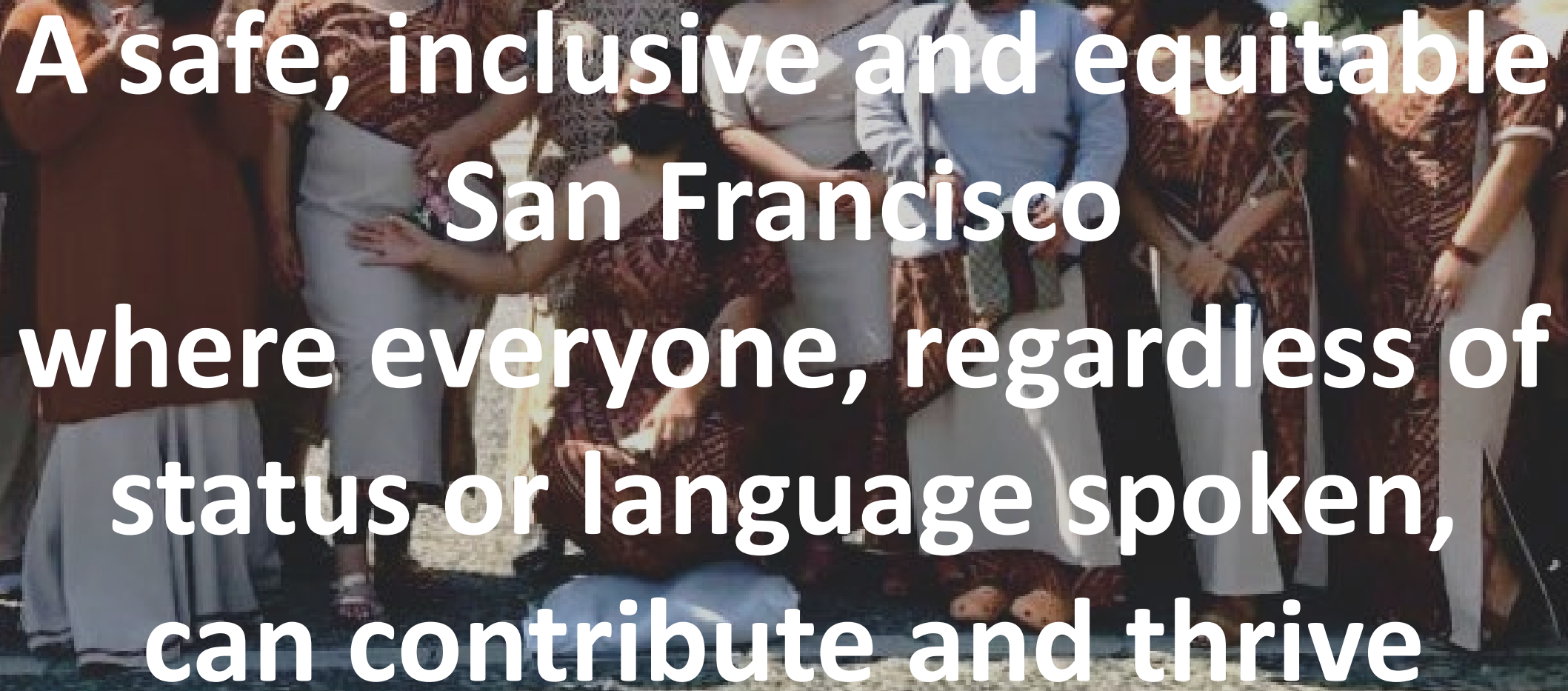
San Francisco Board of Supervisors
Government Audit & Oversight Committee
Thursday, May 20, 2021

Adrienne Pon, Executive Director- OCEIA
Celine Kennelly, Chair- Immigrant Rights Commission
Paul Monge, Commissioner, LAO Committee Chair



San Francisco is home to
over 870,000 people





**A safe, inclusive and equitable
San Francisco
where everyone, regardless of
status or language spoken,
can contribute and thrive**

A close-up portrait of a smiling woman with a red headwrap, set against a dark background. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

**1 in 3 San Franciscans
is an immigrant**

43.1%

**of San Franciscans over the
age of 5 speak a language
other than English at home**

A photograph of a family of three in a public space, likely an airport or transit station. A man on the left wears a brown Adidas cap and a dark jacket, smiling. A woman on the right wears a bright pink puffer jacket and smiles. A baby is being held between them. The background is blurred with lights and other people.

**Language Access
is a right**

Language Equity

Equal access to timely, accurate, information and services should be the standard. This is **essential** during crisis, emergency and public health or safety situations.

OCEIA LAO Responsibilities

- Ensure Citywide implementation of the LAO.
- Analyze Citywide compliance and progress.
- Train, provide tools, and assist departments with implementation, reporting and compliance.
- Inform and educate the public about language rights and services
- Determine Language thresholds and emerging needs.
- Investigate & resolve LAO violations and complaints.

Department LAO Responsibilities

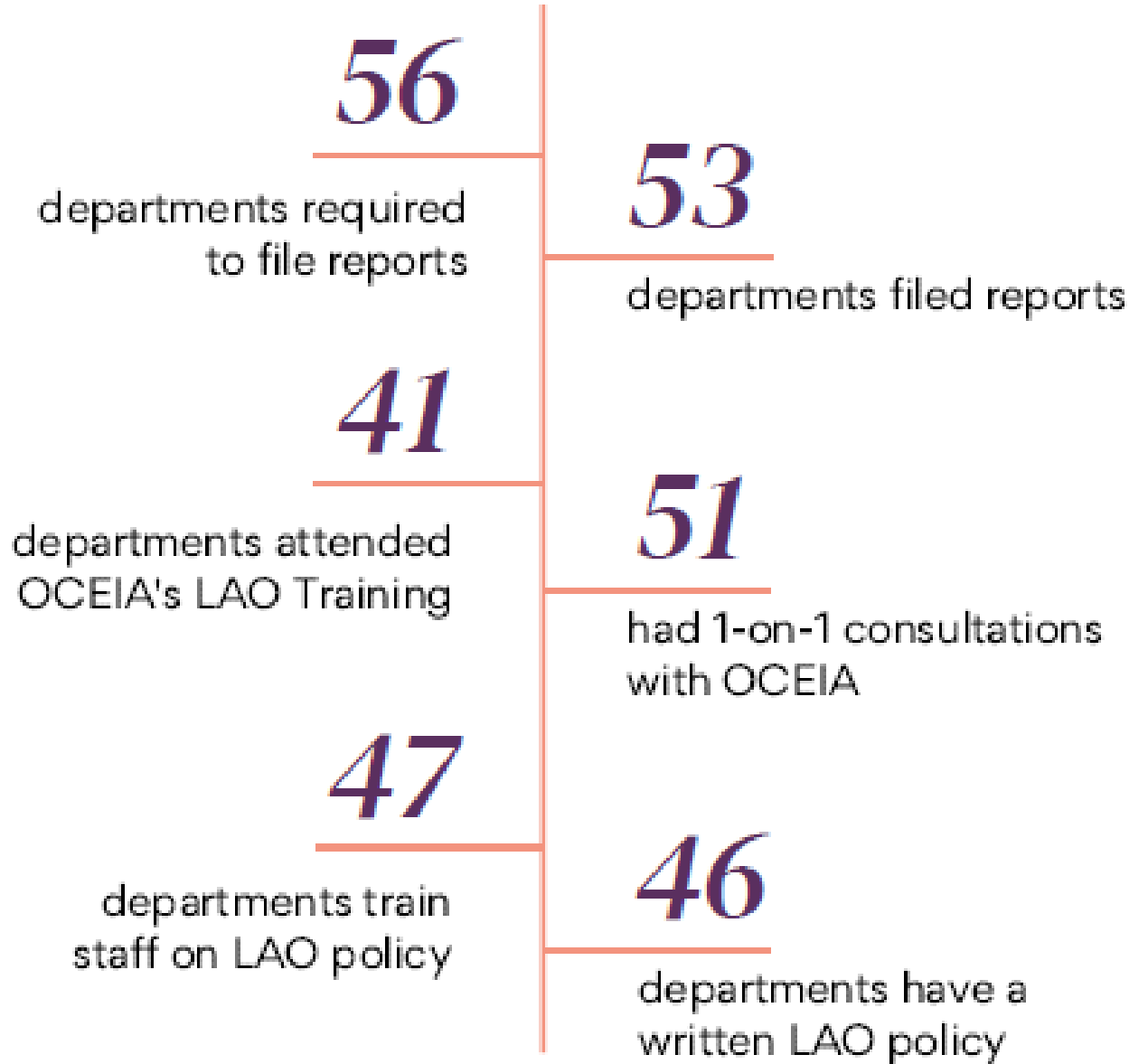
- Inform the public about the right to request language assistance and provision for services.
- Translate vital information in required languages.
- Provide sufficient numbers of bilingual employees.
- Record multilingual telephone messages.
- Provide Interpretation at public meetings and hearings.

LAO Pandemic Challenges for Departments

- Health, economic, racial & social inequities
- Digital divide, online learning inequities
- Language barriers
- Gaps in providing timely, translated info
- Gaps in cultural & linguistic competency
- Inconsistent data collecting & reporting

FY2019- 2020 Citywide Compliance

Department Compliance



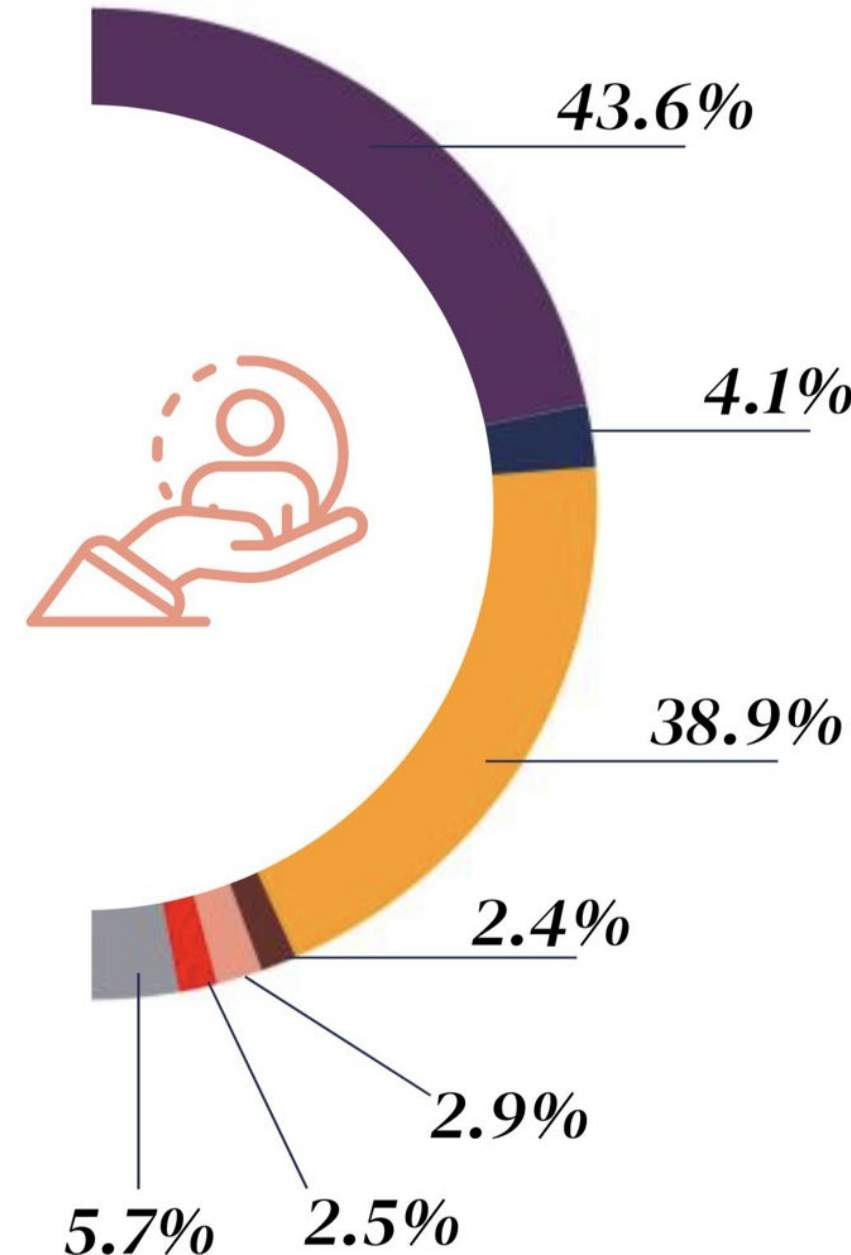
LAO Compliance Key Findings

- The pandemic presented many challenges and disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), immigrant, Limited English Proficient (LEP) and vulnerable populations.
- The total language access services budget across all departments was \$22,737,599, a more than 40% increase from \$16.1 million in the previous year. However, when compared to the City's total operating budget, this amount remains a small fraction, at less than 1%.
- Since FY2017-2018, the overall number of bilingual staff has continued to decrease, although 40 out of 53 departments reported having adequate levels of bilingual employees.

Despite an increase in the City's total population, departments reported that LEP client interactions across all languages decreased, with the largest drop in Cantonese, Spanish, and Mandarin LEP clients.

LEP Client Interactions

Cantonese	287,474
Mandarin	26,726
Spanish	256,990
Filipino	15,639
Russian	19,037
Vietnamese	16,166
Other	37,152



RECOMMENDATIONS/SOLUTIONS

- 1** Increase language services planning and coordination for natural disasters and public health and safety emergencies.
- 2** Increase city and community language access capacity. Adequately fund a centralized language services unit and community interpreters bank to increase assistance and create economic opportunity for community members.
- 3** Expand bilingual certification and language fluency testing in both threshold and emerging languages. Develop more robust assessment, training and support for bilingual City employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SOLUTIONS

- 4 Develop a higher standard for cultural sensitivity, language fluency, and linguistic competence at different levels. Increase training, development and support of bilingual first responders, emergency and victims assistance staffs.
- 5 Increase accountability for language access provisioning, data collection, complaint reporting, and LAO compliance.

SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION



LAO POLICY OVERSIGHT

The **IRC** is the policy advisor to the Mayor, Board of Supervisors and City officials on all issues that concern immigrants in SF.

OCEIA is a the programmatic partner of the IRC, and is a combination of policy, grantmaking, compliance and direct services.

IRC LANGUAGE ACCESS HEARINGS

- The IRC held several hearings throughout 2020-2021 on COVID-19 Impacts on immigrant communities, economic recovery, language access and Anti-AAPI Hate.
- The pandemic exposed numerous gaps and inequities for immigrants and residents who speak primary languages other than English.
- The IRC Language Access Committee was reconvened to partner with City and community agencies.
- Two hearings were held in April and May 2021 on the Language Access Ordinance and the community's experiences with navigating City systems and accessing services.

IRC HEARING ON COVID-19 IMPACTS

Insights from the Economic Recovery Task Force

- Culturally responsive, timely, accessible, and concise information and guidance for small business owners and residents, particularly those with language and technology barriers needed.
- Increase digital literacy and updating tools to bridge the digital divide for many vulnerable populations, including seniors, people with disabilities, parents and students, non-English monolingual speakers, and small business owners.
- Culturally competent, in-language communications and solutions are essential.
- Invest in Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and immigrant communities.

IRC LANGUAGE ACCESS COMMITTEE

Insights from the LAO Hearing Series

1. Strengthen LAO enforcement and accountability.
2. Incorporate a community-centered approach, recognize the ability of community-based organizations to provide culturally sensitive, linguistically competent, and context specific language services.
3. Increase access and support for Mayan community and Black immigrants by addressing inequities, unmet language services needs, and timely translations required for applications.
4. Include non-threshold languages such as African languages, modern standard Arabic, Russian, Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, and Thai
5. Prioritize language services in the budget.

IRC LANGUAGE ACCESS COMMITTEE

- The IRC has developed a multilingual Language Access Survey to assess community needs and inform changes in language services provisioning, accountability and the LAO.
- The Committee will be convening a Community Task Force on Language Access to develop ongoing solutions and improvements to the LAO and provisioning of language services in San Francisco.
- Priority attention and resources must be given to Language Access. Our lives depend on it.

**Language Access should be a priority,
not an afterthought,
to serving and meeting the needs
of all San Franciscans.**