

Limited English Proficiency Outreach Report

King County Department of Elections

投票!

bỏ phiếu!

ivota!

vote!

투표하세요!

Introduction

An important part of the mission for King County Elections is making sure that every eligible County resident, no matter what language they speak, is able to exercise their right to vote. Over the past several years the department, in collaboration with the King County Council and the Executive, has made some important strides in providing more inclusive, accessible elections.

This report is the third of four updates on King County Elections' efforts to provide more options to communities with limited-English speaking proficiency. A final report will be submitted later this year.

Background

Since 2013, there have been several important pieces of legislation passed related to translation and outreach to communities for whom English is a second language. Because these steps were important milestones and provide context for the County's broader commitment to serving traditionally under-represented communities, each legislative action is summarized below.

Previous Legislation

- **2014 Budget**. The 2014 Adopted Budget, Ordinance 17695, Section 33 included Elections Proviso 1, which requested that the department provide "an analysis of options or factors that could provide minority language voting materials for LEP populations in Tiers 1 and 2," including a description of alternative translation materials and services, cost estimates and a feasibility assessment.

The subsequent report titled, "Analysis of options for LEP population" was submitted by the department in June, 2014 and included many recommendations from an LEP Advisory Committee and four specific alternatives:

- An Instructional Brochure to be translated in Tier 1 and 2 languages.
- An Online Toolkit with educational and outreach materials.
- An Elections Ambassador Program through which civic activists would be recruited and compensated in order to provide a direct connection with specific communities. Their role would include providing technical assistance for voter registration and advising the department on key barriers faced by the community.
- Civic Engagement in Schools specifically in support of mock elections for children K-12.

- **2015-2016 Budget**. In the following budget for the 2015-2016 biennium, Ordinance 17941, Section 34, Proviso 2, the Council requested that the Department of Elections report on the activities outlined in the June 2014 report semiannually (specifically June 30, 2015, December 31, 2015, June 30, 2016 and September 30, 2016).
- **Ordinance 18086**. In July, 2015 the Council passed Ordinance 18086, which added Spanish and Korean to the list of languages in which all ballot materials must be translated; prescribed targeted outreach for those language communities with limited-English proficiency; and, set-up a path forward to use data and specific criteria to identify additional languages in the future.
- **Mid-Biennial Supplemental Budget**. In February, 2016 through the mid-biennial supplemental budget process, the Council approved funding for two additional positions for the Department of Elections to provide on-going Spanish and Korean translation and support. They also approved one-time funding for a pilot partnership project for community-based organizations to do voter outreach. In the budget the Council included a proviso that required Elections to submit an evaluation plan for the community-based organizational outreach pilot by June 30, 2016.

This report is in response to the 2015-2016 Budget proviso described above. A second report is being submitted simultaneously to meet the Mid-Biennial Supplemental Budget proviso requirement.

Progress Report on Specific Activities

The following is an update on the specific activities called out in the original “Analysis of options for LEP population” report, as well as several related efforts.

1. Elections Ambassador Program and Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations

Community partnerships and targeted outreach are top priorities for King County Elections this year. With funding approved by the King County Council in February of 2016, the department kicked-off a new community partnership pilot program this May. There are two phases to that work:

- A first phase of funding awarded through a competitive process to community-based organizations for providing voter outreach specifically to Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish and Korean-speaking communities (all of whom are able to receive their ballot materials in their preferred language).

- A second phase of funding awarded through a competitive process to community-based organizations focused on populations other than the four identified in Phase 1, such as East African, Native, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern and European communities.

King County Elections has secured an outstanding partner for this work in the Seattle Foundation and, as a result, has been able to provide larger grants to a larger number of community-based organizations.

The first phase of funding awards is complete and six community-based organizations received \$25,000 each (\$15,000 from King County and \$10,000 as an upfront grant from the Seattle Foundation) to implement their proposed voter outreach field plans.

Representatives from each organization will meet on a monthly basis to discuss what is going well, what could be improved, and what other support they might require from King County Elections. Organizations will also be required to track common metrics in order to produce a comprehensive set of pilot results and outcomes. Applications for the second phase of funding are due by July 11, 2016.

This year, King County Elections will also launch a pilot ambassador program that will compensate individual community liaisons who will provide information and connectivity for their respective communities, as well as advise King County Elections on barriers or specific issues they are facing.

- The program will launch once the processes for awarding Phase I and Phase II funding for community-based voter outreach have been completed. Phase II awards are expected to be released the week of July 18th and the target for launching the ambassador program is late July.
- Ambassadors will be solicited through an application process to include, at a minimum, a letter of interest and a resume.
- The ambassador program is designed to reach communities with less organized infrastructure and who aren't currently represented with formal community-based organizations. Thus, ambassador applicants from communities who weren't represented in Phase I or Phase II funding awards will be prioritized.
- For the pilot program, King County Elections will hire three-to-four ambassadors to do approximately twelve hours of work per month between August and November with a reimbursement rate of \$75/hour. The budget for the program is \$12,000.
- The program will be overseen by King County Election's new Language Services and Community Partnerships program and they will be working closely with the

Executive's Office of Equity and Social Justice. Community liaisons or ambassadors are a central strategy in the proposed ESJ strategic plan and Election's efforts will need to be closely coordinated countywide.

2. Materials Translation

To-date, King County Elections has provided all election-related materials in English, Chinese and Vietnamese. As a result of legislation passed by the King County Council, Korean and Spanish will be offered as well starting with this year's General Election.

To get ready, two new translation staff members, specializing in Korean and Spanish, have been hired to round out the five-person Language Services and Community Engagement program team. Additionally, Elections staff developed a language preference postcard in order to make it easier for community-based organizations to do outreach and for individuals to change their preferred language. Distribution and mailing of these cards will take place starting in July, 2016.

3. Online Tool Kit

King County Elections continues to provide outreach and educational materials in multiple languages. For example, the Guide to Voting in King County is available online in ten different languages. With the addition of Korean and Spanish for this year's General Election, the Elections website, all Elections applications and other online materials will be translated into those languages.

Voters will also have the opportunity to fill out a language preference form online in order to receive their ballot materials in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and Spanish.

4. Mock Election Program

Not only is it critical to reach and engage current King County voters, but it is also imperative that we begin to impress upon the next generation the importance of voting and participatory democracy. King County Elections continues to support civic education, and specifically mock elections, in a variety of ways.

- For several years now the department has partnered with the Renton School District to support three high schools in administering the Associated Student Body (ASB) and class officer elections. This spring a total of 2,283 students participated in the elections that feature look-alike King County Elections ballots.

- This year King County Elections also kicked-off a partnership with the Seattle School District to support civic education and mock elections in Seattle schools. In May the department hosted several dozen K-12 teachers and district staff in a civics curriculum brainstorming session that included a tour of the facility and elections process. Elections and District staff will reconvene in the fall to talk more about rolling-out the new curriculum tools and mock elections.

Going Forward

A top priority for King County Elections is continuing and expanding outreach to limited-English speaking communities. Per Ordinance 18086, the Department of Elections will submit a report by January 30, 2017 that reviews available data from the US Census and other reliable and relevant sources to determine the threshold for adding new languages going forward.

The department will also submit the fourth of these required LES updates to Council by September 30, 2016.