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## **Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means**

*Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget*

*Office of Food Access*

*Office of Language Access*

*Office of Immigrant Advancement*

*Human Rights Commission*

*Age Strong Commission*

***Working Session: Thursday, May 6, 2021, 10:00 a.m.***

***Hearing: Monday, May 17, 2021, 10:00 a.m.***

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The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the various departments' budgets at the Working Session on Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Recording here: <https://youtu.be/X0dZrKqRpHM>

The Administration is requested to respond to all questions in one of three ways:

1. Verbally at the hearing on Monday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, at 10AM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 17<sup>th</sup>, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
3. By deferring to a specific scheduled departmental budget hearing.

Please annotate and return this information request before May 17<sup>th</sup>, indicating how each question will be answered.

### **Office of Language and Communications Access Budget Questions**

#### **Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:**

- What was LCA's budget in FY21, under Neighborhood Services? What is it this year? Please provide a breakdown by personnel and non-personnel. Please provide additional detail regarding how your budget was spent last year, what new funding will be used for this year, and changes in FTE.
  - FY21 Breakdown: \$176,320 in Permanent Employees, \$593,585 in Contracted Services
  - FY22 Breakdown: \$269,382 in Permanent Employees, \$897,585 in Contracted Services, \$3,000 in Office Supplies & Materials
- Does LCA assist departments with ASL translation?
  - LCA provides the resources and trainings necessary for departments to acquire ASL interpretation for meetings and events. This is a combination of virtual and in-person trainings as well as one-pagers. LCA also uses Purple - an on-demand interpretation service for American Sign Language Interpretation that's available to all departments.



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- Are there City guidelines for putting out accessible information on social media?
  - For example, do departments provide “alt text” for graphics/digital posters, to aid third-party translation and text readers?
    - The City aims to adhere to an 8th grade reading level with all materials (as possible), our Intro. to LCA training touches upon ALT. Text and other forms of accessibility. We are currently working on finalizing training on Accessible Content - which will address creating screen reader accessible documents, ALT Text, and more. We also have an accessible icons list for departments to leverage and use on outreach materials.
- Under the Administration’s updated language access policy, what are your new commitments, how are you implementing changes, how is it impacting your metrics and goals? Are your resources sufficient given these new responsibilities?
  - The new Language and Communications Access Policy strengthens the existing work the City has been doing around language and communications access. New changes include Departmental Language and Communications Access plans, changes in language access standards, and more front-facing services from LCA. LCA is working internally with departments and the City to implement this policy.
- Under the Language Access ordinance being discussed by the Council, what would the new commitments be, how are you thinking about implementing the changes, and how would it impact metrics and goals? Would your resources be sufficient under these new responsibilities?
  - The Amended Communications Ordinance will strengthen the existing work around Language and Communications Access within the City. While the ordinance is still in working sessions, new changes include departmental language and communications access plans, changes in language access standards and more front-facing services for LCA.
- Please provide detail on the new Research Analyst role.



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- The Research Analyst will be crucial in gathering data from our communities to increase our knowledge of language and disability access needs within Boston and internally support the evaluating and analyzing departments' internal reports.
- Is 5 FTE sufficient for carrying out your work? Has there been any discussion of requiring departments to designate some internal FTE time to language access, not just establish a point person?
  - Conversations on increasing capacity within LCA are ongoing with OBM. LCA liaisons within departments are point persons designated by a department.
- What does the department training on protocols for language access for the coordinators include?
  - LCA Liaisons receive an onboarding one-pager with an overview of tasks to orient them to LCA. LCA also has a one-on-one meeting with the liaison. LCA has monthly meetings for all LCA liaisons and one-on-one meetings as needed to support and uplift their work.
- LCA has \$897,585 in contracted services, but later in the RFI it says LCA has no existing contracts. Please clarify and explain what the budgeted amount is planned to be used for.
  - LCA's contracted services funding is allocated to the departments in the City of Boston. Departments leverage their allocated funding to provide accommodations by using vendors from our Vendors Directory. LCA then receives the invoices for those projects and pays for the services.

### **Councilor Ed Flynn asked:**

- Language Access is another critical department in the City that should see increased funding. Can you talk about how the office is expanding its role and function as an independent office?
  - We are becoming a more front-facing department that works closely with CBOs and Bostonians to seek feedback on Language and Disability access



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within the City. Internally we will continue to support departments by providing resources, training and funding for LCA accommodations and oversee compliance with the City's LCAP (Language and Communications Access Policy) and collect reports and data from departments.

- Can you talk about how you recruit people who speak various languages?
  - At this time, LCA is mostly an internal facing department, with most of the LCA accommodations coming from professional vendors, as we expand we hope to be able to recruit persons with multilingual language capacity
- Please talk about how you can support BPS, as they need more outreach for language access.
  - LCA is happy to touch base with the Office of English Learners and see how we can work together to continue increasing access within the City.
- What is the process for a city department that needs forms translated?
  - LCA has a Content Translation Protocol that is shared with departments LCA liaisons. A quick overview: Once a department has estimated costs of translation, notified their LCA liaison, and verified their funding allocation, departments leverage one of three resources - LCA Volunteer Pool, Multilingual Staff or Vendor Directory (depending on the document) to get a translation and then after getting a translation back they use either of the three resources again (depending on the document) to get the document reviewed.
- What is the protocol for helping a constituent that comes into City Hall and needs an interpreter?
  - For on-demand interpretation needs, the City has in place a language line service which is telephonic interpretation over the phone, we have language identification cards that can be presented to constituents to identify the language they need, we have multilingual staff registry which departments can use to identify multilingual staff in their department that



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can provide information in-language, a volunteer pool that could be leveraged for short interpretation needs and Video Remote Interpretation Services for ASL and Spoken Language needs.

### **Councilor Julia Mejia asked:**

- We've been working with you on a new language access ordinance that would likely require changes in funding. Can you speak to how your funding needs would change should the ordinance pass, and how your new funding may be anticipating these changes?
  - The new investments in contracted services will support the new changes within the Language and Communications Access Policy and the investments in FTEs will increase capacity to support these new changes.
- New federal regulations came in from HUD. How does the new funding address the implementation of these new standards?
  - The new investments in contracted services will support the new changes within the Language and Communications Access Policy and the investments in FTEs will increase capacity to support these new changes.

### **Councilor Lydia Edwards asked:**

- There has been some back and forth over whether literacy belongs under the purview of Language Access or Workforce Development or somewhere else. Can you clarify which department should oversee literacy efforts?
  - LCA is excited to continue these conversations during the working session to be able to understand the need and next steps to increasing access for this population.

### **Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:**

- LCA does enormous work for all City departments. Is LCA currently right-sized to meet all these needs?



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- LCA is currently working with OBM and the City to increase capacity within LCA through FTE's and interns

### **Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:**

- What did LCA's budget and staffing look like under ONS? Or what portion of ONS's budget and staffing in FY21 was dedicated to language and communications access functions?
  - FY21 budget under ONS: \$176,320.00 - Personnel, \$593,585 - Contracted Services
- Can LCA talk about its anticipated \$900,000 in contracts? What will these contracts be for? What efforts will the office make to procure diverse vendors?
  - The contracted services allocation will be leveraged by departments within the City to provide translation, interpretation and assistive technology services. LCA has a vendor directory that is leveraged by departments. We work closely with CBOs to identify community-based translators and interpreters and also the directory is made up of Community Based Organizations, Small business and Companies.
- What specifically did LCA do with its increased investment last year from the BPD OT budget?
  - The need for language and disability access increased within the City during the COVID-19 pandemic and the BPD OT allocation helped expand our contracted services.
- In the Request for Information, LCA provided a breakdown of employees that are moving out of ONS: Why does the table only show 2 employees? Is LCA still planning on moving 3 positions out of ONS to LCA?
  - As part of FY21 from ONS there is the third position that LCA is currently working on hiring.
- When does LCA anticipate the office being fully staffed with its 5 FTEs?
  - LCA currently has a position posted and is working to increase capacity within the office.