



COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Item No. 11b

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting March 24, 2026

DATE: March 17, 2026

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Bookda Gheisar, Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
LeAnn Blanco, Civil Rights Program Manager
Jay Doran, Manager, EDI Policy and Communications

SUBJECT: Briefing on the Implementation of the Commission’s Language Access Order (2023-05)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2023, the Port of Seattle Commission adopted Order 2023-05 to advance language access at the Port. The Order directed the Port to develop a language access policy and plan to ensure the inclusion of non-English or limited English speakers, including those who are hard of hearing or deaf, in the use of Port services and facilities; and the Port-wide implementation of a plan directing divisions with public services to offer language assistance, including translation and/or interpretation. The policy makes language access a permanent, ongoing commitment by the Port of Seattle in every department and every division.

The Order identified nine deliverables. The majority of those deliverables were completed by February 2024, including a Port-wide assessment of current practices (involving a review of publicly facing documents, resources, signage, websites, social media sites, and forms); a community survey to determine the types of services and languages most useful to those we serve; and the formation of a Language Access Cohort made up of the departments that are the highest users of language access services.

During a briefing to the Commission in February 2024, the Commission granted a two-year extension to complete the remaining deliverables of the Order. The briefing on March 24, 2026, will report on the progress of the following outstanding deliverables.

1. Language Access Guidance Manual – for department use
2. Multilingual Compensation Policy – for roles that are public-facing, front-line, non-represented, and utilize one of the top identified languages (Phase One)
3. Annual Department Language Access Plans – focusing on goals, implementation, reporting, and budget inclusion

Meeting Date: March 24, 2026

PROGRESS TO DATE

During the past two years, OEDI – in collaboration with Human Resources and the 18 departments represented in the Language Access Cohort – has worked to complete and implement the remaining elements of the Commission’s Language Access Order.

Language Access Guidance Manual

The Language Access Guidance Manual, which was finalized in early 2026, is designed to support Port teams in providing timely and meaningful access to our facilities and services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons, as well as effective communication for individuals who are Deaf and speak American Sign Language (ASL). Port teams should strive to provide language assistance services to Limited English Proficient individuals whom they encounter or whenever a Limited English Proficient person requests language assistance services, as well as provide effective communication methods to individuals who are Deaf and speak American Sign Language (ASL). The Guidance Manual provides resources and instructions on everything from requesting interpretation and translation services to developing annual language access plans to guidance outlining the Port's complaint and feedback process.

OEDI performed extensive research on best practices and examples of Language Access Guidance Manuals at other agencies and municipalities, both local and national. We also engaged the Language Access Cohort to revise and fine-tune the content of the Port’s Language Access Guidance Manual. OEDI has begun implementing and sharing the Guidance Manual across the organization, including the creation of a centralized page on Compass, a short instructional video, and engagement with several departments.

Multilingual Compensation Policy

Human Resources and OEDI partnered to create a multilingual compensation model and implementation plan for roles that are public-facing, front-line, non-represented, in phase one of the rollout. To be eligible, an employee must meet the three criteria outlined below.

1. The multilingual compensation will only be available to employees who speak one of the Port’s identified top nine languages – Spanish, Amharic, ASL, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Somali, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.
2. Employees are eligible if they hold specific positions within the Port. In phase one, these positions are defined as public-facing, front-line, non-represented roles. Using this definition, a handful of positions in both the Aviation and Maritime divisions were identified for the first phase of implementation.
3. Employees must demonstrate language proficiency through an approved verification process with one of the Port’s language access contractors.

It is important to note that applying for multilingual pay is voluntary, and this policy will not displace any employee already in a role identified as eligible for multilingual pay.

Meeting Date: March 24, 2026

During the remainder of 2026, HR and OEDI will be setting up the infrastructure and systems to operationalize this policy with the goal of implementing it at the beginning of 2027.

Annual Department Language Access Plans

At the end of 2025, for the first time in the Port’s history, all departments in the organization were led through a process to develop annual language access goals that will be implemented and tracked throughout 2026. This process was developed and led by the OEDI and the Language Access Cohort, which had experience of doing this in 2024.

At a high-level, the Language Access Cohort developed a tool for departments to assess their language access needs, define goals related to those needs, establish metrics and key performance indicators to measure the progress of those goals, and estimate the budget needed for successful implementation. This process was incorporated into the Port’s annual budgeting and business planning process, and the Language Access Cohort worked with OEDI to audit departments’ submitted plans and provide additional support and guidance to refine plans, as needed. Every department, except 10, established language access goals and a plan to achieve those goals for 2026. The 10 departments that did not create goals are internal-facing departments that provided clear communication about why this work is not relevant to their responsibilities.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

- (1) Language Access Guidance Manual
- (2) Presentation slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

March 12, 2024 – The Commission authorized an extension of the three outstanding deliverables of Order 2023-05.

April 11, 2023 – The Commission authorized The Language Access Order (2023-05).