

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2023 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

April 14, 2022

Question: What would be the cost and benefits associated with creating a multi-lingual office or division of immigration affairs? (Update of FY 2022 Memo #5)

Response:

The [FY 2022 Budget Question #005](#) outlined the costs and benefits associated with creating a multi-lingual office or division of immigration affairs.

The City of Alexandria started a Multi-cultural Services Initiative in 2001/2002 that was housed in the Department of Human Services (now DCHS). The focus at the time was on building relationships between the City of Alexandria and the residents of the Arlandria community. It was initially staffed with one person titled Multi-Cultural Services Coordinator (MSC). Staff attended regular community events and offered outreach and education on all City services. Additionally, the staff person assumed supervision over the Hispanic Education and Outreach Program (HEOP) that provided ELL and other acculturation classes to approximately 400\ adult participants annually. The MSC also ensured all City departments had Language Access Plans that complied with Title VI. In 2009, during the recession, the HEOP program was cut out of the budget. The MSC staff person was redeployed to another role in the overall City government. If there was interest in establishing a multi-lingual office or division of immigration affairs that handles one-to-one outreach with individuals and facilitates connection to services meeting their needs and coordinates multi-lingual services across all departments, it is estimated that staffing an office related to this effort would require up to three positions at a cost of \$101,938 to \$150,238 per position.

The Race and Social Equity Officer position in the City Manager's office approved in the FY 2020 budget was filled in February 2020. The focus of the position is to collaborate with City departments to evaluate policies, practice, and procedures for institutional and systemic bias that may benefit some and not others. Additionally, the position is charged with coordinating with underrepresented groups of population who have not traditionally been involved in government decision making, including non-English speakers and immigrant communities. The goal is to reduce and eliminate disparities and inequities experienced by all residents, especially those in communities of color and other groups who have been historically and systemically marginalized and to ensure current polices are revisited regularly to ensure all Alexandria residents are treated equitably. The benefits of engaging with historically marginalized communities will be in gathering more diverse input around polices that closely impact the

livelihood of those groups of population as well as interaction within the larger Alexandria community.

In September of 2021 a staff advisory group, including the Race and Social Equity Officer, convened to develop an action plan for improving and expanding effective and meaningful community engagement incorporating lessons learned during pandemic engagement and focusing strategies for equitable engagement and outcomes. The group solicited feedback from a host of internal and external stakeholders to identify common themes and needs to be addressed. Based on feedback from City departments and community organization the staff advisory group presented several recommendations including providing internal assistance across departments, maintaining a community engagement website, managing a new language access program.

The City Manager's FY 2023 proposed budget includes \$400,000 in contingency funding for the planning and implementation of City-wide community outreach, engagement, and communications strategies and initiatives. This contingency funding will allow the City to restructure the communications department and to change the City's community engagement approach to address meaningful equitable community engagement and address the multi-lingual needs in the City and organization.

All Alexandria, the resolution adopted by the Alexandria City Council in February 2021 committing to race and social equity, specifically highlights the need for expanded language access and implementation of culturally relevant strategies and tactics to do so. This resolution highlights the City's continued work towards reducing and eliminating disparities in community outcomes and service provision, especially for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and other historically marginalized groups.