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March 2024

Inclusion through Language



Dear Friends,

In the most fundamental way, language is at the foundation of access and inclusion. Language shapes and influences how we understand and analyze the world around us, how we communicate our needs and desires, and how we build relationships and communities. Language possesses the power to both connect and divide us.

We are all fortunate to live in a community that boasts a rich diversity of people and cultures, including the languages we speak and sign. For instance, the Seattle Public School district estimates their students speak more than 140 different languages or dialects. Additionally, the most recent U.S. Census found almost 30% of households in King County speak a language other than English at home. For an organization like the Port that has a large service area, this can create many challenges. But, it also presents us with incredible opportunities to advance access and inclusion, ensuring that all members of our community can equally access our services, programs, and facilities.

In April 2023, the Port of Seattle Commission passed a [Language Access Order](#), directing the Port to create a “policy and plan that ensures the inclusion of non or limited English speakers, including those who are hard of hearing or deaf, in the use of Port services and facilities.” This past month, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and External Relations [presented to the Commission](#) (beginning at 1:50:14) on our work to date and our goals for the road ahead.

During our presentation, we shared the findings of our [Language Access Assessment](#), which documents internal practices, gaps, and areas for improvement along with the language access needs of external communities and partners. Based on these findings and the input from a cohort of Port departments that have the greatest need for language services, we developed a set of recommendations for how the organization will ensure that language access becomes embedded in every corner of the organization. Over the course of the next two years, we will:

- Document a **language access manual**, providing departments with guidance to establish and meet interpretation and translation requests;
- Develop a **compensation policy** for employees who are tasked with interpretation services outside of their regular job duties;
- Support our **Language Access Cohort** in developing annual departmental language access plans – focusing on goals, implementation, reporting, and budgeting;
- Invest in **tools and technology** for translation and interpretation;
- Create **employee training** to understand the importance of language access and how to use the tools and infrastructure we put into place;
- Improve the **graphics and signage** in our facilities to make services more accessible and make it easier for people to request interpretation assistance; and
- Continue to **engage with communities** about their needs and the effectiveness of our language access work.

We are excited for this work to transform our organization and how we serve the community. These efforts will move us beyond basic compliance with federal regulations by establishing language access as an ongoing, permanent commitment of our organization. I look forward to continuing to update you on these efforts, and if you have any questions or feedback, please contact us.

In Unity,



Bookda Gheisar
Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Centering Equity and Taking Action

Join Our Team!



Are you passionate about developing the next generation of working professionals? Do you value equity and inclusion? Then apply to join our team as a [Workforce Development Program Manager & Data Analyst](#). In this position, you will implement strategies in the Maritime and Green Jobs sectors to develop pipelines for community members to gain quality, family-wage jobs in those sectors, including the [Youth Maritime Career Launch](#). You will work with a variety of partners in those sectors, from employers to community-based organizations. The deadline to apply is April 18, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.

OEDI's Annual Report to the Port Commission

On March 26, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion delivered its annual report to the Port of Seattle Commission, highlighting successes and challenges from 2023 and sharing goals and priorities for the remainder of 2024. Learn more in the [2023 OEDI Annual Report](#) and [watch the recording](#) (beginning at 2:07:15) of the Commission presentation.

Youth Maritime Career Launch – Recruiting Students!



The [Youth Maritime Career Launch](#) program is for young people ages 18-24 to receive training and certification that qualifies them for entry-level roles in our region's maritime industry! The Port partners with maritime industry employers to host participants for three-month internships that may lead to permanent employment.

Learn more about the program in this [short video](#), and apply for the program through the [Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle](#) or [Washington Maritime Blue](#).

Meet Three Women Charting a Course for the Future at the Port

In celebration of Women’s History Month, enjoy the first of a two-part series to celebrate women of the Port of Seattle — Kelli Goodwin, Rut Perez-Studer, and Madison Edwards — who are charting a course for a bright future. [Sea where a career in maritime can take you!](#)



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