

# Language Equity Program & Policy

Regional Transit Committee

September 17, 2025



# Objectives:

- Familiarity with Metro's Language Equity Program
- Accomplishments so far
- Next steps



# Metro's Language Equity Program

# Language Equity Laws

- **City of Seattle**

- Executive Order 2017-10 in 2017
- Seattle Municipal Code: 23 mentions of providing meaningful access and interpretation and translation when needed

- **King County**

- Executive Order INF 14-2 (AEO) Written Language Translation Process
- Ordinance 18665- establishing translation assistance requirements for non-English speaking persons

- **Washington State**

- SSB 5046: requires state agencies that provide safety information in an emergency or disaster to provide public notices of public health, safety, and welfare in a language other than English (amends RCW 38.52)

- **Federal**

- Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964

# King County is Linguistically Diverse

Did you know?



**Growing immigrant population**

More than 586,000 or 26% of King County residents were born outside the U.S. Between 2010 and 2022 the foreign-born population grew by 47%.  
(Source: ACS)



**Linguistic diversity**

Nearly 664,000 or 30% King County residents over age 5 speak a language other than English at home. Nearly 36% of these residents report they do not speak English very well.  
(Source: ACS)

# Mission, Vision and Language Equity


**Mission:**

Provide the best possible public transportation services and **improve regional mobility** and **quality of life** in King County.

**Vision:**

Metro will advance its mission by delivering a regional, innovative, and integrated mobility network that is safe, **equitable**, and sustainable.



Equity	Language Equity	Language Access
<p>King County defines equity as a system that promotes <b>fairness</b> and ensures that <b>all residents</b> in King County have <b>equal access</b> to <b>opportunities, power</b> and <b>resources</b>.</p> 	<p>Emphasizes the importance of providing <b>fair</b> and <b>equal</b> access to information and services for people who may have limited proficiency in the dominant language.</p> <p><i>Equal access to information and services</i></p>	<p>Is the way we make Language Equity happen!</p> <p>Language Access includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Translation</li><li>• Transcreation</li><li>• Interpretation</li><li>• Other language-related support services (i.e. Plain Language)</li></ul>

# Why is a Language Equity Program a priority for Metro?

## Fulfill Policy Commitments and Achieve our Goals

Align with County policies, fulfill Metro policies like **Strategic Plan**, **Climate Action Plan**, and **Metro Connects**; Internal language equity supports **workforce recruiting, development**, and retention.

## Comply with Legal Requirements

As an agency, we have federal, state, and county **legal requirements** to meet. By prioritizing Language Access, we **minimize legal risks** and demonstrate our **commitment to meeting regulatory standards**.

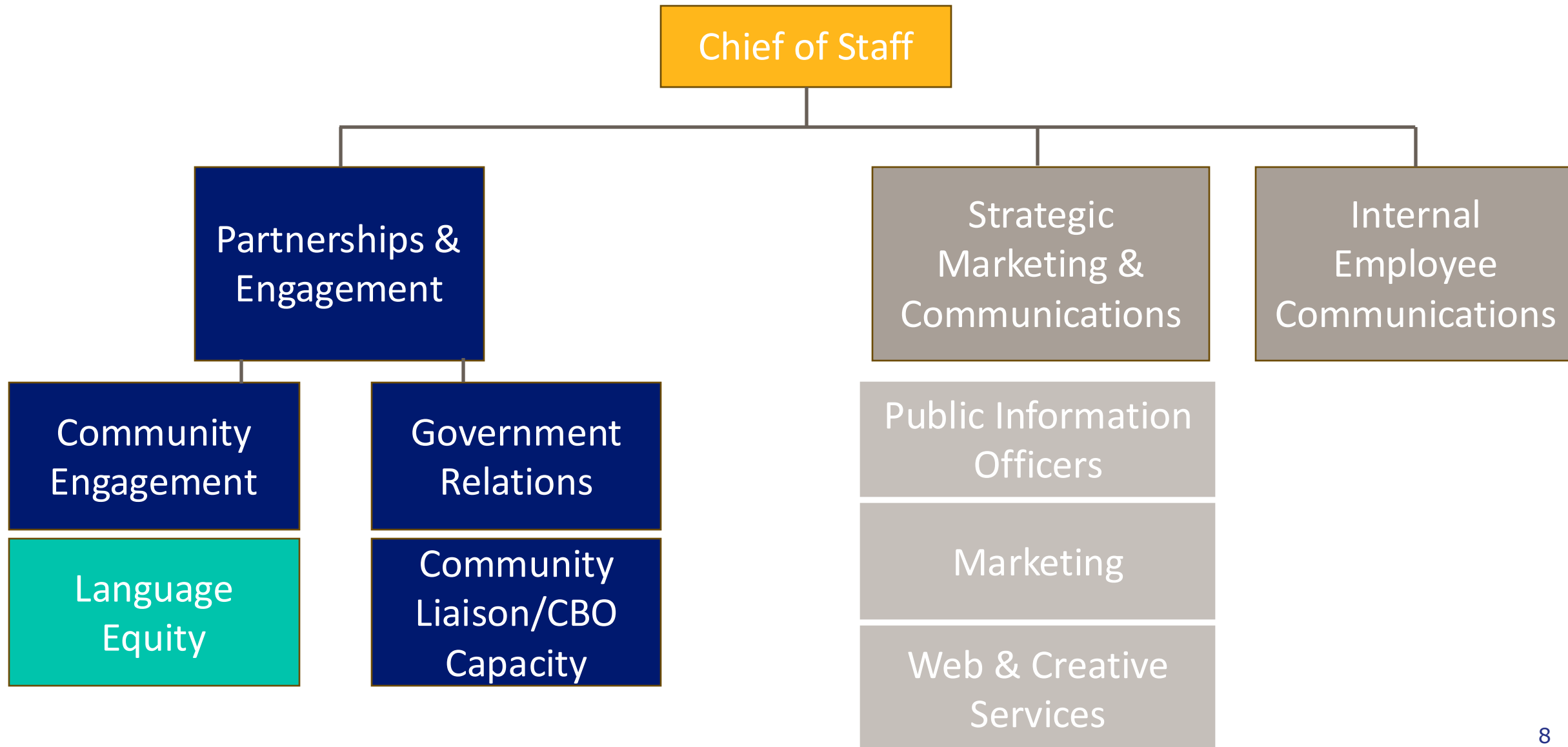
## Provide Clear Policies and Procedures & Supportive Resources

Clear, standardized guidelines and supportive resources **empower** Metro staff to confidently engage with people whom English is not their first language. This, in turn provides linguistically diverse customers with a **consistent, positive experience** and access to information and services.

## Track, resource, and continue to improve

Tracking practices, outcomes, and associated costs allows us to make informed decisions about our practices, cost effectiveness, and ways to invest and improve to maximize impact.

# Partnerships & Engagement





# Accomplishments So Far

# Program Accomplishments So Far

- **Centralized in the General Manager's Office through the Partnerships & Engagement Team**
  - Department policy drafted
  - Provide guidance, resources, tools
  - Support advancing priorities
  - Track and report
  - Fill vacant Language Equity lead in the Partnerships & Engagement Team
- **Language Equity Implementation Initiative 2023-present**
  - Staff from across multiple teams assessed current state and identified priority recommendations.
  - Cultivated a group of Language Equity Champions, key for change management.



# Program Accomplishments So Far

- **Resources and tools**

- Language Equity Portal- translation, interpretation and other guidance and tools
- Language Line Interpretation access & training
- Plain language trainings

- **Service and Workforce Initiative support**


- Support bus operator curriculum modernization
- Facilitated feedback sessions with new trainees about language access needs.
- Plain language review of key operator training materials

Welcome to the Language Equity Portal!

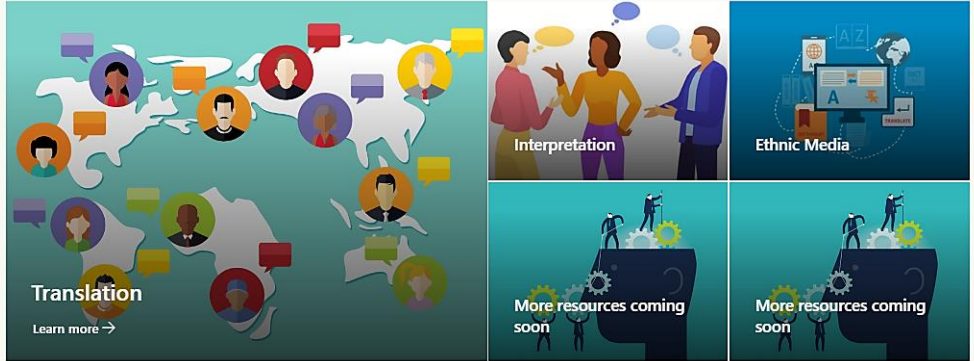
**King County Metro** is committed to providing fair and equal access to services for all riders, regardless of language background. As part of this effort, it has established a **Language Equity Program** aimed at helping break down language barriers for linguistically diverse riders.

**Language equity** is the equal treatment and access to information, resources, and services for all riders. By promoting language equity, we work towards creating an inclusive and accessible transit system for all.

On this portal, you'll find **tools**, **information**, and **resources** to help provide fair, equal, and effective language access to all communities in King County.



To ensure language equity and access, please indicate which of the following language-related services your project requires:



The grid contains four panels: 1. Translation: A world map with icons of people from various backgrounds. Text: 'Translation', 'Learn more →'. 2. Interpretation: Two people talking. Text: 'Interpretation'. 3. Ethnic Media: A person at a computer with a globe. Text: 'Ethnic Media'. 4. More resources coming soon: Two people climbing a large gear. Text: 'More resources coming soon'.

# Next Steps

# Language Equity Implementation Plan Priority Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1: Policies, procedures, training**
  - Formalizing and centralizing language equity at Metro
- **Recommendation 2: Identifying languages for translation**
  - Standardize criteria for determining what materials should be translated and in which languages.
- **Recommendation 3: Vital documents**
  - Define, track, and maintain vital documents
- **Recommendation 4: Informing the public**
  - Standardize public notifications about language access services
- **Recommendation 5: Translation and interpretation practices**
  - Explore opportunities for a new model for translation and interpretations services

# What's Next?

- **Metro Wide**
  - Finalize Metro Language Equity Policy
  - Advance Implementation Plan recommendations
  - Continue to frame as Universal Access with ADA
  - Develop staff trainings
- **Internal Employee**
  - Continued coordination with EEO and EIB program
  - Identify employee language equity priorities
  - Supporting Service & Workforce Initiative, curriculum for Supervisor in Training, plain language
- **External Employee**
  - Supporting Service & Workforce Initiative-recruitment, hiring, training





# Metro's Goal: Language access at every step

- On the bus and at bus stops
- Park & Rides
- Pass Sales & Lost & Found
- Customer Service in-person, on the phone, web, mobile
- Trip planning
- Buying and loading ORCA, fare programs
- Transit planning and real-time notifications
- Community Engagement
- Applying for jobs and working at Metro
- Rider and Strategic Plan dashboards
- Marketing, media and social media



**Thank you!**