



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE

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Hon. Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

April 9, 2021

Dear Borough President Brewer:

At your request, IBO looked at the city's expenditure for translation services, including spending on city employees whose job involves providing translation services as well as vendors who provide such services under contract with the city. In a typical year, the city spends a total of about \$19 million on these services, which include both verbal language interpretative services and translations of written material and documents from English into other languages. As you noted, under Local Law 30 of 2017, which amended the City Charter and the city's administrative code in relation to "improving access to city services for limited English proficiency individuals," the city is now required to provide for the translation of certain published documents into the 10 most commonly spoken non-English languages.

We were able to determine the city's current expenditure on employees with the job title of translator or interpreter. Currently the city employs approximately 50 people in these job titles with an average annual salary of \$63,000. Including the typical fringe costs for civilian employees brings the total average cost for translators employed by the city to \$93,000 a year. IBO has not done a detailed analysis of the additional work that would be required to translate documents covered by Local Law 30. As an approximation, if the city had to hire one additional translator to handle preparation of documents in each of the 10 most common languages, as required under Local Law 30, it would cost the city roughly \$930,000 annually (employing one translator for each language). There would likely also be the need for supervisory and support personnel, which could cost roughly \$200,000 or more annually, depending on the number of new hires.

Although IBO was able to identify city spending for contracted translation services in general by reviewing all city expenditures and their descriptions, we were not able to reliably distinguish between payments for written and verbal translation services because the descriptions of the services are often vague or general in nature.

IBO estimates that annual city expenditure on contracted translation services totaled \$13.5 million in 2018, \$12.9 million in 2019 and \$20.7 million in 2020 (all years refer to fiscal years). The increase in 2020 is partly attributable to Covid-related expenditures, which were approximately \$5 million.

If you require any additional details, please feel free to contact me or Jonathan Rosenberg, IBO's Director of Budget Review, at 347-831-7509 or jonathanr@ibo.nyc.ny.us.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Lowenstein

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