Human Rights Commission

Chair: Katie Lawler Turnbull

Vice Chair: Andrea Alvarez

Staff Liaison: Pat Coleman

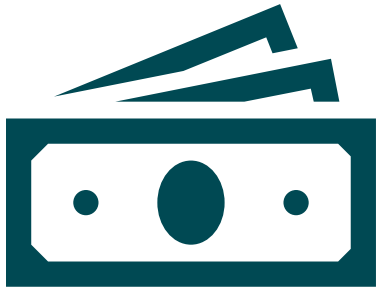
Work Plan Item #1: Neighborhood Revitalization Grant Program

Support city staff on reviewing different Neighborhood Grant Program components as needed.

Status: Complete

Contributions include: Participated in Racial equity and inclusion impact analysis in Q1

Work Plan Item #2: Cashless businesses and unbanked policy



City staff approached the HRC before their report on cashless businesses and unbanked policy went to the city council for review. Staff asked feedback on the information provided.

Current Status: Complete

Continued contributions: Staff asked commissioners to report information they find in the community related to this topic for further investigation

Work Plan Item #3 – Children's First Literacy Festival

- Yearly, the HRC partners with Children's First and attends an event promoting city happenings
- Current Status: Complete (will be a consistent workplan item)
- Contributions include:
  - Partnering with Elections staff and tabling at the Ice Cream Social Aug. 10, 2025
  - Hosted Banned Book Brunch Aug. 16, 2025

Work Plan Item #4 – Human Rights Award

- Re-implement the Human Rights Awards which last took place in 2022.
- Current Status: Complete (will be an ongoing work plan item)
  - 2024 Award presented to Dana Strahnson March 17, 2025
  - Preparing to roll out 2025 call for submissions in Q4

Work Plan Item #5 – Support Citywide Vision 4.0 Process

- Support the citywide Vision 4.0 process by participating directly and/or encouraging others to participate, and by sharing information with other community members about the process.
- Current Status: Ongoing
- Contribution include:
  - Tabling at city events
  - Hosting facilitated conversations
  - Initiative support at National Night Out

Additional Efforts

- Collaborated with the REI Division to table at the Golden Valley Pride Parade June 7, 2025
- Contributed to resources added to the city's community resource page that are catered to human rights.
- Collaborated with Friends of the Arts to conduct an Art Walk in Wolfe Park before the St. Louis Park Art Fair

Title VI
Kick off Session

September 8, 2025

Pa Dao Yang

Racial equity & inclusion director

Cheyenne Brodeen

Administrative services director

What is Title VI? A landmark civil rights law

- Title VI is a key part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
  - It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance.
- The principle is simple - public funds should not be used to subsidize discrimination.
- Over time, protections have been expanded to prevent discrimination based on age, sex, disability, and income status.
- Other human rights laws we are subject to: MN Human Rights Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), etc.

Title VI: setting the stage

- Title IV aligns directly with the city's strategic priority to **be a leader in racial equity and inclusion.**
- It allows us to be intentional and proactive to remove barriers, create access, and build trust.
- A Title IV Program is a key tool that puts this commitment into practice by moving us from ***saying*** we value racial equity to ***doing*** the work of racial equity.
- It’s more than a check box for a federal grant - it is a direct reflection of our city’s priorities and values.

Title VI: key components of a program

- **Nondiscrimination statement:** A public promise that we will not discriminate.
- **Title VI coordinator:** A designated person responsible for overseeing compliance and addressing concerns. (for St. Louis Park, this will be housed in the racial equity and inclusion division).
- **Complaint process:** A clear, accessible procedure for anyone to file a discrimination complaint.
- **Public notification:** Actively informing residents of their rights under Title VI

Components of a program, cont.

- **Public participation plan:** Strategies to ensure all voices, especially from underrepresented communities, are heard in decision-making.
- **Language Access Plan (LAP):** A plan to provide translation and interpretation services to ensure residents with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) can access city services.
- **Staff training:** Ensuring city employees have the knowledge to uphold Title VI principles in their daily work.
- **Data collection & analysis**: Using demographic data to ensure our programs are serving everyone equitably.

Minnesota and St Louis Park is a growing diverse community

People of Color in MN
2030: 30%
2040: 40%

Nation wide: 1 in 20 adults experience mental health challenges

593,000 population in MN has a physical disability

MN Immigration accounts for 94% net gains 2020-2024

July 2023 – July 2024:
30,000 new arrivals came to MN
2.5x higher than past decade

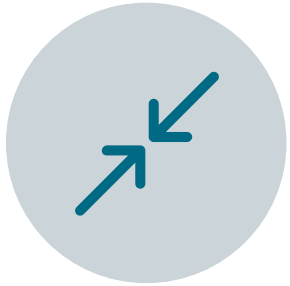
St Louis Park top non-English languages:
Spanish,
Somali, Tibetan, French, & Oromo

Why this matters for us, now

Major infrastructure projects: With projects like Cedar/Lou and some affordable housing programs, we must ensure equitable access, construction impacts, and benefits for all communities near the line.

Growing diversity: St. Louis Park's community is growing more diverse. A Title VI program ensures our services evolve to meet the needs of all residents.

Building trust: A transparent and active Title VI program builds trust between the city and its residents, showing a real commitment to equity.



Proactive governance: It helps us identify and fix inequitable practices before they cause harm, leading to better outcomes for everyone.

Underreported discrimination

- Lack of awareness
- Fear of retaliation
- Perceived ineffectiveness
- Complex of filing complaint/discrimination report
- Specific communities, especially communities of color, has experience discrimination and less likely to report a discrimination due to historical mistrust with institutions

Efforts to address underreporting

Public awareness campaigns: How to file and where to file a discrimination report; know your rights

Community outreach: Engage with key community leaders and build trust to report discrimination

Streamline the process: Make filing and reporting effective and efficient, have a clear investigation process, report back process on timely resolutions

A proactive way of thinking

Without a program

We might only address discrimination after a complaint is filed.

With a program

We proactively look at our policies, budgets, and projects through an equity lens to prevent discrimination from happening in the first place.

Next steps

- The current Title VI Program approved in 2022 by council will be updated to reflect citywide. A draft of the citywide Title VI Program will be presented to the core group and the human rights commission for review and feedback before bringing it back to council approval.
- REI Division anticipate to launch the citywide Title VI Program in 2026. A communication plan will be put in place to inform city employees about the Title VI Program and includes training, process/procedures, resources, and guidance.

Language Access Plan

Sept 8, 2025

Pa Dao Yang, racial equity and inclusion director
Jacque Smith, communications and technology director
Jocelyn Hernandez Guitron, racial equity and inclusion specialist

Background

- March 1, 2025: federal administration issued Executive Order 14224, declaring English as the official language of the United States
- Department of Justice rescinded prior limited English proficiency guidance,* significantly weakening federal language access frameworks

**Executive Order 13166, est. 2000 by the Clinton Administration, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*

Response

- REI and communications collaborated to start creating a language access plan, an extension of the Title VI program
- Workgroup includes city staff who:
  - Represent all city departments;
  - Have roles with high-touch communication and interaction with the public; and/or
  - Are native speakers, readers, and/or writers of a non-English language, with lived experiences.

Limited English Proficient

- An individual who *does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand it* is described in federal terms as Limited English Proficient (LEP).
- A LEP individual can also be described using the US Census categories such as, “Speak language other than English at home” or “Speak English less than very well.”
- The term *identifies individuals who may need language assistance or services to have meaningful access to programs, benefits, and information* – particularly in areas like education, healthcare and government services.

Comprehensive guidance

The language access plan supports city employees in:

1. Understanding federal, state, and local laws on how to support LEP individuals and community members
2. Providing procedures and process for embedding equitable, accessible resources, technical assistance, and community engagement with LEP individuals and community members when using city programs, services and activities.
3. Empower, educate, and inform LEP individuals and community members on their rights to access city programs, services and activities no matter their language preference and/or limited English skills.

Importance of language access plan

1. Ensures legal compliance
2. Promotes inclusivity and equity
3. Improves service quality and outcomes
4. Reduces organizational liability
5. Fosters trust and community engagement

Importance to St. Louis Park

- Diverse linguistic community
- Top five non-English languages in St. Louis Park:*
    1. Spanish
    2. Somali
    3. Tibetan
    4. French
    5. Oromo

**According to Minnesota Department of Education language data for St. Louis Park Public Schools*

Importance to St. Louis Park

St. Louis Park is home to about 50 diverse languages, including

- Russian
- Hebrew
- Hmong
- Vietnamese
- Thai
- Ojibwe
- Ukrainian
- Wolof
- Punjabi
- Urdu
- Farsi
- Tigrinya
- Bassa
- Mina
- And more!

St. Louis Park's language access journey

- Pre-2015 - 2022: Contract with Telelanguage
- 2022: Contract with INGCO International
  - Translation (written)
  - Interpretation (oral/spoken)
    - In person
    - By phone
    - By video (desktop, phone app)
- Language Line – primarily used by the police department

Gathering citywide insight

- Citywide language access plan survey: May 2025
  - Awareness of using the city's contracted translation/interpretation service
  - Experience working with LEP communities
  - Interest in and importance of creating a language access plan.
- 94 responses from nine department

Survey results

- Recognized the importance of the city providing translation and interpretation services to support the LEP community.
- Reported interactions with LEP individuals are currently rare, but recognized the need to inform the LEP community about their right to access free interpretation and translated materials from the city.
- Requested more training on who the LEP community is and how to use the city's interpretation and translation services. Such training would build staff confidence in using these resources, leading to more equitable access to city services, programs, and activities for all residents.

Fun fact

City employees reported fluency in the following non-English languages:

Spanish	Hindi	Chinese	Russian	Oromo
Amharic	Hmong	Lao	French	Italian

Next steps

- The staff workgroup and human rights commission will review and provide input on the language access plan before it is finalized.
- The final language access plan will be presented to council when the Title VI program is brought forth for council approval in 2026.