



# The Seattle Public Library

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**To:** Ann Yarbrough, Grants Program, Washington State Library

**From:** Andra Addison, Communications Director, The Seattle Public Library

**RE:** 2010 Renew Washington Communications Grant; Final Narrative Report (Translation/advertising project)

**Date:** Sept. 30, 2010

1. This grant has helped amplify the value of our library with decision-makers in our community. Strongly agree.

Two years ago, the city of Seattle launched an initiative to perform public engagement in a manner that reflected the racial and cultural diversity of Seattle. This initiative, led by the mayor, aimed to improve services to Seattle's growing immigrant and refugee population, including improved translation. Recent estimates suggest as many as 120,000 foreign-born individuals reside in Seattle, potentially 20 percent of Seattle's total population. Elected officials have filtered budget proposals based on strategies that take into account the city's cultural diversity, noting a healthy democracy requires being inclusive in public processes with all segments of the community. This grant allowed the Library to extend and promote its efforts to engage non-English speakers in its strategic planning process in ways that were noted by city officials.

2. Summarize the project, the situation it was intended to address, and the objectives of the project.

**Background:** The Seattle Public Library launched a year-long strategic planning process in early 2010 to help guide its future growth and services. It included a variety of opportunities for members of the community to share their needs and desires for Library services.

**Situation:** The most important tool for collecting feedback in the Strategic Planning process was a 29-question community survey.

**Objectives:** To ensure the Library heard from immigrants and refugees, the Library wanted to translate the survey into Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian and Spanish (languages most spoken by non-English speakers in Seattle). To help promote participation in the survey by these targeted patrons, the Library wanted to advertise in local newspapers read by Chinese-, Vietnamese-, Russian- and Spanish-speakers. Through these efforts, the Library hoped to increase participation in the survey by these targeted groups, which would ultimately help the Library plan more effective services and outreach to these hard to reach populations.

3. Summarize the results of the project, including activities accomplished and any problems or unexpected outcomes encountered.

The one problem we encountered in completing the project was that we were not able to place ads in all the newspapers we originally intended to. The reason we were unable to achieve this objective was because the deadlines and publication dates for three of the publications did not match the timeframe for our survey. We ended up placing ads in nine of the 12 newspapers we originally planned to advertise in.

The total number of surveys completed in the four languages was 200. Fifty-five people completed the survey in Spanish, 66 in Chinese, 54 in Russian and 25 in Vietnamese. An additional 1,300 people who told us English was not the first language spoken in their homes, also completed the survey (but in English).

The Seattle Public Library understood from the outset that participation by non-English speakers would be difficult and that the numbers would not be scientific – results would help us possibly identify trends and gaps in service that we would want to explore further.

Patrons expressed appreciation that the Library gave them the opportunity to share feedback in their native language. The information provided helped the Library get a broader sense of usage patterns in different neighborhoods, including the popularity of various cultural programs, use of the Web site and the importance of children's activities. In addition, staff used the translated surveys as outreach tools to engage with new Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian and Spanish Library patrons.

Interestingly, we discovered that even among the non-English speakers who regularly used our services, many did not know about programs targeted specifically for them – such as homework help in Spanish or ESL Talk Time classes. We now know we need to do a better job of getting the word out about our services.

While the awareness issue was the most unexpected outcome, there were others:

We were surprised at the number of elderly people who filled out the survey, as well as English speakers who chose to fill the survey out in another language. A number of staff members were mentioned by name as providing excellent customer service, which was very rewarding for staff to hear.

4. In the context of your communication effort, quantify where possible, the results of the project.

**Number of decision-makers reached:** City Council, Mayor's office all received information about our outreach efforts to non-English speakers. The total number of residents who filled out the survey (English and non-English speaking residents), was impressive: Nearly 33,000 people, which was widely publicized in the media.

**Copies of translated survey printed and distributed:** 950 in Chinese; 675 in Russian; 1,250 in Spanish; 1,100 in Vietnamese. These were also available for download on our Web site.

**50 posters** with information about the survey in Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese were distributed and posted around the Library system.

**All 650 staff members** received internal messaging about the translated surveys and a **core team of approximately 30 Strategic Planning staff and volunteers** performed outreach to patrons with the surveys at branch locations. We do not have figures on how many people printed off the translated surveys from our website.

**Ads to patrons in our targeted languages** (encouraging them to fill out the survey), reached the following numbers of residents (newspaper circulation statistics):

- Chinese Times: 10,000
- Northwest Asian Weekly: 25,000 “committed readers”
- Russian World (bi-weekly): 10,000
- Phuong Dong Times (weekly): 31,000
- Seattle Viet Times (weekly): 19,000
- Nguoi Viet Tay Ba (weekly): 10,000
- La Raza: 25,000
- El Mundo, 20,000
- Nguoi Viet Ngay Nay (not able to obtain circulation figures)

The mayor of Seattle released his proposed 2011-12 budget and it did not include reductions to Outreach Services for immigrants and refugees.

5. Did the project meet its stated objectives? Compare the project objectives to actual accomplishments.

The project met its stated objectives:

- The survey was translated and publicized in the four targeted languages and the comments contributed to how the Library’s new strategic plan is being shaped in terms of services and resources for non-English speakers
- Ads were successfully placed in nine publications whose deadlines and publication dates met the survey participation dates
- Information collected shed light on the need for increased promotion/awareness of Library services, the importance of staff engagement and outreach and specific service/resource needs in various parts of the city to the four targeted populations.