Communicating With Multilingual Populations:
Language Access Toolkit

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Does your organization ensure that individuals and communities with limited English proficiency have the same level of access to and engagement with your organization's work as those who speak English as their primary language?

Only you can answer that question. However, consider that, according to the **Migration Policy Institute**, more than 25 million individuals living in the United States identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) in 2019. Given that demographic data about this population is incomplete, it is assumed that the actual number of speakers of languages other than English in the United States is much higher. Moreover, as immigrant and refugee populations grow, delivering high-quality and culturally appropriate communications becomes ever more urgent.

25,000,000
Limited English Proficient individuals in the U.S. in 2019
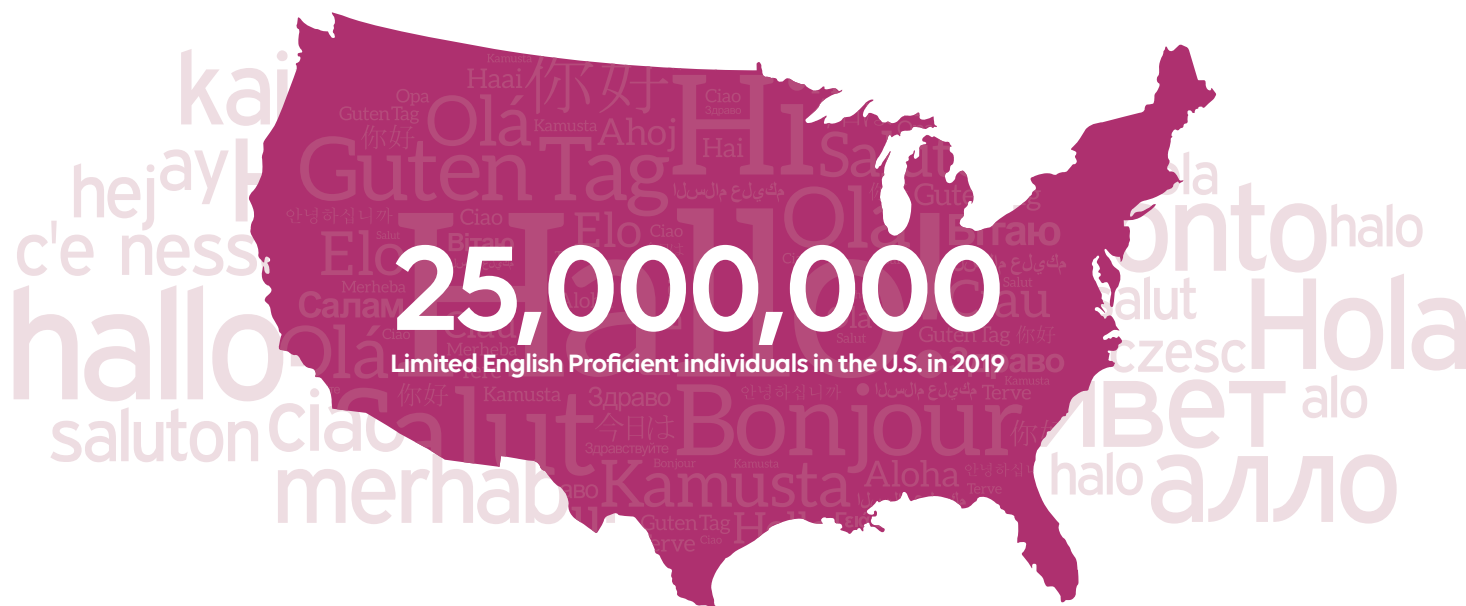
This Toolkit was created to help organizations working to serve, engage, organize, or mobilize linguistically diverse populations by considering ways to establish or improve its language accessibility practices. The Toolkit includes practical information and tools intended to support nonprofit organizations in fostering organizational fluency around language accessibility, including tools to help operationalize language access at the project, program, or organizational level.

Language Accessibility is an emergent field that aims to ensure that LEP individuals and communities receive high-quality and culturally appropriate translation and interpretation services. Vital needs such as access to financial and occupational resources, education, housing, public safety, healthcare, and public benefits are difficult, if not impossible, to access or understand without language assistance. The term "language access" encompasses efforts being made as part of this emergent field to ensure equitable access to services, information, tools, news, stories, and resources so that those with limited English proficiency can participate fully in civic and communal life.

Language Justice is achieved when power and agency are redistributed among LEP individuals and communities through the deliberate dismantling of oppressive systems in which those who do not communicate in English are deprived of human rights on the basis of language. While Language Justice is the ultimate goal of most language access activities, this Toolkit focuses on just a few practical tools in an effort to help organizations establish or refine language access practices. Additional resources about Language Justice can be found in the **Resources** section of this Toolkit.

This Toolkit was created by **Global Wordsmiths**, a language accessibility advocacy organization that provides translation, interpretation, training, and consulting services.

Organizations that provide language assistance recognize and embrace the fact that we live in a multilingual and multicultural society. Cultivating inclusivity and belonging among diverse populations necessitates being intentional about language accessibility. We hope this Toolkit inspires ideas and can help your organization incorporate this important practice in your communications and engagement practices.

Getting Fluent:
Key Concepts & Terminology

Getting Fluent: Key Concepts & Terminology

The following are some terms that are commonly used in the context of language accessibility:

General Terms

Language access: A broad term used to describe the provision of services to individuals who do not communicate in English using language assistance tools and resources such as translation and interpretation. This term is used increasingly by service providers, advocates, policymakers, and administrators to describe any number of methodologies, plans, systems, strategies, resources and practices used in order to achieve effective communication with Limited English Proficient audiences.

Language Access Plan: A document that outlines how an organization will provide equitable access to Limited English Proficient audiences.

Language Assistance Services: Oral and written language services needed to assist Limited English Proficient individuals to communicate effectively with staff, and to provide such individuals with meaningful access to, and an equal opportunity to participate fully in the services, activities, or other programs provided by an organization.

Language Justice: Achieved when power and agency are redistributed among LEP individuals and communities through the deliberate dismantling of oppressive systems in which those who do not communicate in English are deprived of human rights on the basis of language.

Primary Language: An individual's primary language is the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.

Source Language: The original language of a document that is being translated, or "the language that is translated from."

Target Language: The language into which a document is translated, or "the language that is translated into."

Terms About Individuals or Groups

Bilingual Staff or Employee: A staff person or employee who has demonstrated proficiency in English and reading, writing, speaking, or understanding at least one other language.

English Language Learner (ELL): English Language Learner is a term used in some English-speaking countries, such as the United States and Canada, to describe a person who is learning English in addition to their native language or any other language they may speak.

Language Access Coordinator: The staff member in an organization who is in charge of equipping the organization with the tools and information needed to provide language access to English Learners, including the creation and/ or implementation of a Language Access Plan.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): "Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals may be entitled language assistance with respect to a particular type or service, benefit, or encounter." (source: **LEP.gov**)

Service-Related Terms

Consecutive Interpretation: Interpretation in which a foreign language interpreter or sign language interpreter waits until the speaker finishes an entire message rendered in a source language, before rendering the message in a target language.

In-Language Communication: Direct communication with an individual in that individual's preferred language.

In-Person Interpretation: In-person rendering of one language into another by a trained Interpreter.

Interpretation: The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally rendering it into another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning.

Outreach Documents: Documents utilized to provide information to the general public and which aim to target individuals who are eligible or may be eligible for benefits, services, or programs.

Over-the-Phone Interpretation (OPI): Otherwise known as telephonic interpreting or OPI for short, this modality of interpretation is essentially a 3-way conference call with an interpreter, the commissioner of the call, and the LEP party.

Point of Contact: A person or a department serving as the coordinator or focal point of information concerning an activity or program.

Qualified Translator or Interpreter: An in-house staff member or contracted Translator or Interpreter who has demonstrated his or her competence to interpret or translate through formal training or certification.

Sight Translation: The oral rendition of text written in one language into another language and is usually done in the moment. Sight translation is often requested of an Interpreter during an interpreting assignment.

Simultaneous Interpretation: When an **interpreter** translates the message from the source language to the target language in real time, following the speaker's natural way of speaking.

Translation: The replacement of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

Video Remote Interpretation (VRI): A video/telecommunication service that uses devices such as web cameras or videophones to provide sign language or spoken language interpreting services.

Can you translate this for me?

¡Claro! Puedo traducir eso para usted.

Language Access **Planning & Operationalizing**

Language Access Planning & Operationalizing

Creating a Language Access Plan can help your organization   understand the needs of your audiences, identify your own resources and needs, and design policies and procedures that your organization can implement to fulfill those needs.

In practical terms, a Language Access Plan provides a framework for components such as: assessment of needs; identification of vendors; training, programs, policies, and procedures to execute on language assistance services; ongoing evaluation of service quality; and plans for continuous monitoring and improvement.

No two plans will be the same, but most language access professionals agree that there are several essential components to a successful Language Access Plan. This Toolkit presents practical information to help your organization operationalize the following components:

- Conducting a Needs Assessment
- Identifying Which Services You Will Offer, and to Whom
- Training Staff
- Providing Notice of Service Availability to LEP Individuals
- General Best Practices

The recommendations and resources below are based on a framework for evaluating language access needs that balances the following four factors:

1

The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with an activity, service, or program

2

The nature and importance of the activity or service provided by the program

3

The resources available to the grantee/recipient or agency, and costs

4

The total cost to operationalize language access frameworks and policies, and provide said services

Some Best Practices to Keep in Mind

This toolkit will help you come up with a Language Access Plan. However, having a plan is only one piece of the puzzle. In order to ensure the implementation of your plan, we recommend the following:

- **Designate a language access coordinator** (or point-person) who will oversee the execution of language accessibility planning, policies, and procedures.

- **Convene a group of stakeholders** within your organization who will aid in the execution of language accessibility planning, policies, and procedures.

- **Procure a language services provider** with whom you can partner to provide translation and interpretation services.

- **Designate a budget line** for language access. See below for some tips.

For Organizations Receiving Federal Funding

Any **Recipient of Federal Funding Assistance** is required under **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166** to develop and execute a Language Access Plan. The components of a language access plan typically mirror the principles of an organization's language access policy. In many cases, the purpose of designing a language access plan is to establish those policies, including logistical elements such as how translation and interpretation will be delivered, and to whom; and, steps for data collection, monitoring and evaluation protocols, training, and needs assessment. Language access policies are typically enforceable, so a Language Access Plan may also be used as an important mechanism to guide and demonstrate adherence to such policies. You can learn more **here**.

Budgeting for Language Assistance Services

Figuring out how much money to allocate for translation and interpretation services can feel daunting, in part because costs are directly related to the scope of your needs. Those needs may be difficult to determine if you have never planned for deploying language assistance services in the past. This is why it's important to conduct a needs assessment to determine how and when your organization might use language assistance services. See below for more information about assessing needs. Once you have a rough idea of the frequency of events or services for which you will need interpretation services, and which documents you would like to have translated (as well as the respective target languages), you can begin to map out a starter budget. You can refine your budget year over year based on actual versus estimated usage, based on average pricing.

As a very general rule, prices will vary for language assistance services, within the following range:

Written Translation
$0.15 – $0.25
per word

Consecutive Onsite or Video Remote Interpretation
$50 – $125
per hour
(two-hour minimum)

Conducting a
Needs Assessment

Identifying Which
**Services You
Will Offer**

Conducting a Needs Assessment

Conducting a simple needs assessment is the first step toward identifying what needs or "gaps" exist within your organization when it comes to offering language assistance.

The following worksheet has been adapted from the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) "**Language Access Plan Worksheet**."

Some sample assessment questions to consider:

What is the name of this program or service?

What is the nature or mission of this program or service?

What are the main target audiences for this program or service?

How might procuring language access services for this activity, service, or communication support your programmatic or organizational goal of communicating or engaging with LEP individuals or communities?

What is the number or proportion of LEP individuals who are eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by this program or service and what language(s) do they speak?

What data sources were used to determine the number or proportion of LEP persons who are eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by this program or service?

How frequently will LEP individuals be in contact with this program or service?
☐ Daily
☐ Weekly
☐ Monthly
☐ Yearly
☐ Rarely
☐ Often

What resources are currently available for the provision of language access services? *Includes both personnel, contractors, or budget amounts.*

How will your organization determine whether an individual may need language assistance services?

☐ Use of "I Speak Cards"

☐ Surveying participants in advance

☐ Observation

☐ Other

Identifying Which Services You Will Offer

Which type(s) of language assistance services will be provided to participants?

Written Translation

☐ **All Documents**

List here:

☐ **Vital Documents**

List here:

☐ **Outreach Materials**

List here:

☐ **Materials will be translated as need arises**

List here:

☐ **Other**

List here:

Written translation will be completed by:

☐ **Bilingual staff**
Name(s) of bilingual staff:

☐ **Volunteers**
Name(s) of volunteers(s):

☐ **Professional translation service provider**
Name(s) of service provider(s):

Onsite interpretation

Onsite Interpretation will be performed by:

☐ **Bilingual staff**
Name(s) of bilingual staff:

☐ **Volunteers**
Name(s) of volunteers(s):

☐ **Professional translation service provider**
Name(s) of service provider(s):

Video interpretation

Video Interpretation will be performed by:

☐ **Bilingual staff**
Name(s) of bilingual staff:

☐ **Volunteers**
Name(s) of volunteers(s):

☐ **Professional translation service provider**
Name(s) of service provider(s):

Telephonic interpretation

Telephonic Interpretation will be performed by:

☐ **Bilingual staff**
Name(s) of bilingual staff:

☐ **Volunteers**
Name(s) of volunteers(s)

☐ **Professional translation service provider**
Name(s) of service provider(s):

How will you monitor the quality of the language services provided?

Training, Notification, Monitoring and Updating your plan

Training Staff

Which staff members will receive language access training? Choose all that apply.
☐ Frontline staff
☐ Administrative staff
☐ Volunteers
☐ Managers and supervisors
☐ Bilingual staff
☐ Executive staff
☐ Other:

What type(s) of training will staff members receive and how often will they receive it?
(For example: staff members will attend one, 2-hour, in-person training and receive an annual email reminding them of our language access policies and procedures).

Notice to LEP Individuals

How will you notify program participants that language access services are available to them at no cost? Choose all that apply. For translated notice templates, see the **Resources** section at the end of this toolkit.
☐ Posting signs in intake areas/ entry points
☐ Providing notice during initial point of contact
☐ Posting notice and taglines on website
☐ Include notice on outreach documents
☐ Other:

Monitoring and Updating Your Language Access Plan

Who will be responsible for reviewing and updating this Language Access Plan?

How often will this Language Access Plan be reviewed?
☐ After each event, activity, or communication
☐ Quarterly
☐ Yearly
☐ Alongside broader strategic planning
☐ Other:

When the plan is reviewed, what will be assessed?
☐ Current LEP populations in geographical areas served
☐ Frequency of encounters with LEP groups
☐ Nature of activities being made available
☐ Availability of internal resources
☐ Whether existing assistance is meeting the needs of LEP individuals
☐ Whether staff know and understand the Language Access Plan and how to implement it
☐ Whether identified sources for assistance are still available and viable
☐ Other:
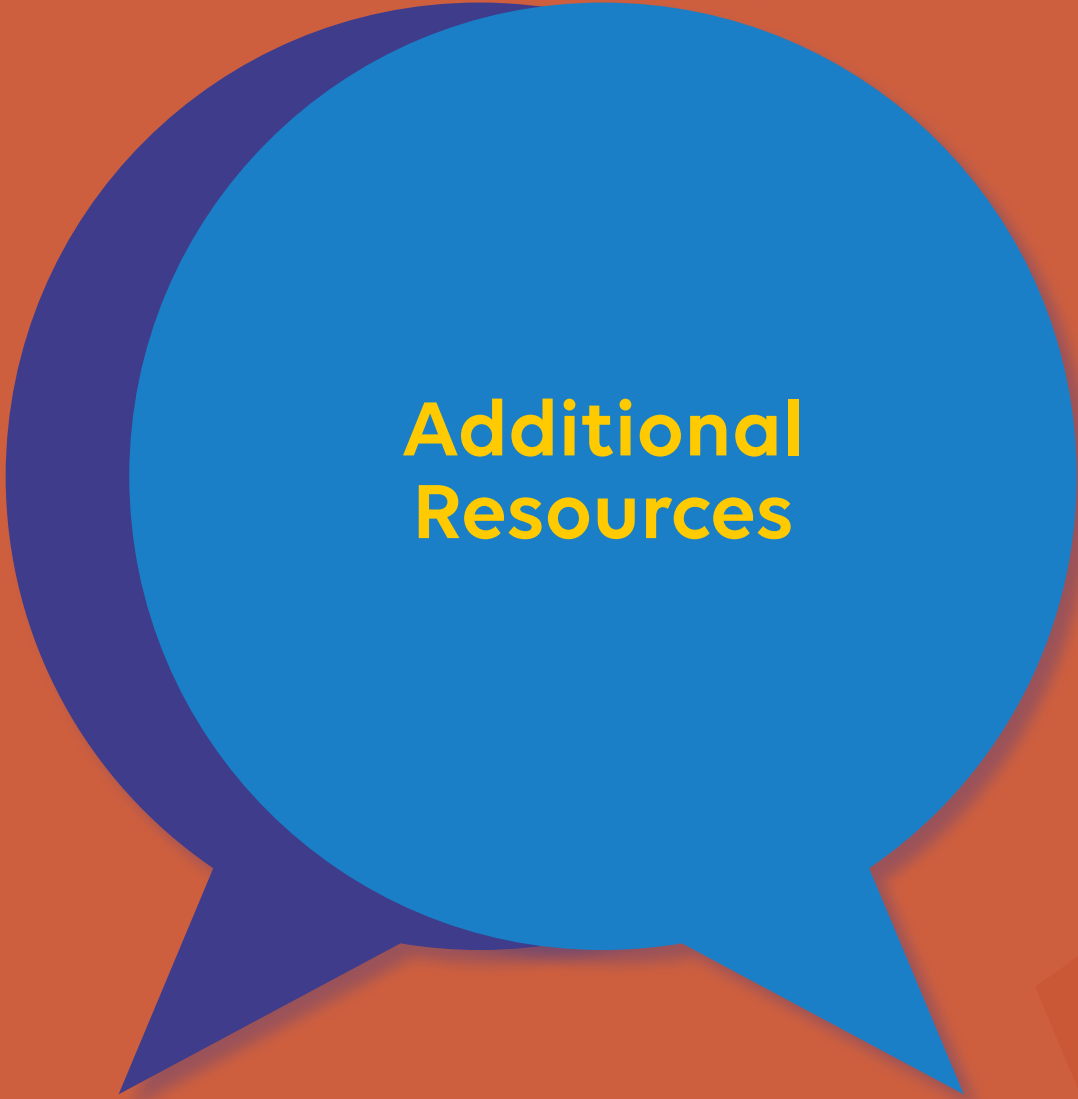
Additional Resources

Additional Resources

Language Access Planning:
https://www.lep.gov/language-access-planning

More Information About Language Justice:
https://sites.uw.edu/multilingualux/language-justice-resources

Title VI Guidance for Recipients:
https://www.lep.gov/title-vi-guidance-for-recipients

Limited English Proficiency:
https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/special-topics/limited-english-proficiency/index.html

Translated Notice Templates:
https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/section-1557/translated-resources/index.html