

A Straightforward Guide to Language Access Planning

How to connect
people with critical
resources in their
own language



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There are almost 70 million people in the United States who speak a language other than English at home. This may mean they are not native speakers of English, and/or are just learning English and have limited English proficiency (LEP).

Not being proficient in English causes significant problems in accessing various services, engaging with a community, and communicating in different settings. In some cases, this may just be inconvenient. But in other cases, it can prevent people from accessing essential services like legal aid, financial services, or healthcare. In the most severe situations, language barriers can be life-threatening when people who speak English as a second language need emergency help or crucial health information.

Providing people who speak English as a second language with access to materials and resources in their own language is called 'language access'. It is not only a legal obligation here in the U.S. but is also vital for maintaining strong communities, enabling people to thrive, and driving diversity, equity, and inclusion in your community.

This comprehensive guide will help your organization build a language access plan to provide the people who speak English as a second language in your community access to the services they need from you.

Expanding your language services to accommodate the needs of people who speak English as a second language is:

- Necessary for the best outcomes for your community members
- An activity that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion
- An ethical responsibility
- The law
- The right thing to do



What is **language access**?

Translation and interpretation services are the most common forms of language access, but it can also include providing voiceovers and subtitles for multimedia files (i.e. video) in the target language. The goal of providing these services is to make sure people who speak English as a second language or people with limited English proficiency (LEP) have equal access to information, services, and opportunities, regardless of language barriers. In practice, that could look like a translated job application or insurance brochure, or it could be an interpreter assisting with a conversation at a doctor's appointment. Language barriers happen at various touchpoints and interactions such as appointments, phone calls, web searches, and filling out forms. Language access gaps arise across all industries including healthcare, education, law enforcement, legal, financial, social services, and the private sector.

The importance of **language access** in our society

In a country as diverse as the United States, language access is vital to ensuring inclusivity and providing people with equal access to essential public services. For people who speak English as a second language or people with limited English proficiency (LEP), navigating healthcare, education, and legal systems can be challenging, overwhelming, and scary. Without language access, people who don't speak English well face significant barriers to accessing information and receiving important services. This can lead to misunderstandings, mistakes, and increased vulnerability, particularly in essential services such as healthcare, legal services, education, and law enforcement.

For example, in healthcare settings, miscommunications can lead to incorrect diagnoses or poor understanding of medication instructions or treatment plans. In legal settings, misunderstandings can result in legal errors, lack of clarity, misinterpretation of rights, and incorrect outcomes.

However, by making sure that all people receive language access regardless of their native language, these barriers can be overcome, leading to:

- › Better communication
- › Improved health
- › Stronger educational outcomes
- › Improved financial well-being
- › Stronger legal support
- › Equal opportunity
- › Stronger feelings of belonging
- › Increased inclusivity in communities
- › Better opportunities for social and economic mobility
- › Improved ability to thrive



ROSA

Receiving emergency treatment

Rosa, a Cuban woman, went to the hospital on Christmas day because she had severe abdominal pain. The medical professionals asked many questions, but Rosa had a hard time understanding their questions and explaining her symptoms and situation in English. Once a Spanish/English interpreter arrived and was able to help her, the doctors properly diagnosed her issues, provided the right treatment, and sent her home for Christmas with her family. This interpreter brought emotional intelligence, cultural understanding, and domain expertise as well as linguistic fluency to the situation.

Federal and State **Language Access Laws & Regulations**

Federal and state laws have been established to support language access for people with varying levels of English proficiency. All legislation is based on the principle that language should not be a barrier to accessing public services. Here's a quick summary of these laws and regulations.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs that receive federal financial assistance. Under Title VI, language access is considered a critical component of ensuring people with limited English skills receive non-discriminatory access to public services. Any organization that receives funding from the federal government must provide language access services to LEP people to comply with Title VI.

Executive Order 13166

Executive Order 13166, issued by President Bill Clinton in 2000, requires federal agencies that provide services to the public to develop a system to provide meaningful and equal access to services for people with limited English, including access to interpretation, translation, and other language services. To comply with this order, federal agencies must identify the language needs of LEP people and provide appropriate language support so that they can access the services and programs they need.

State-Specific Language Access Laws

Many states have also established laws to promote language access in public services. These laws may vary by state, but they typically require public services to provide interpretation and translation services for non-native English-speaking people.

For example, California has the California Language Access Act, which requires state agencies to develop a language access plan and provide services to ensure that people who speak English as a second language can access public services and programs.

Other states, such as New York and Illinois, have also established language access laws to ensure that LEP people have equal access to public services and programs.

In Washington, House Bill 1153 was signed into law for language access in schools. This law requires school districts to create language access plans that ensure the availability of interpretation services, especially for important meetings between parents and school officials.



ANTON

Resolving a bank dispute

A Ukrainian man named Anton was involved in a dispute with their bank. The bank was saying that Anton was behind on mortgage payments, but he insisted he made payments as scheduled. It turned out that the issue started when Anton changed jobs and started working on a commercial fishing boat. His new job was seasonal, meaning there were months when he would be out in the sea and months when he didn't work at all. His paychecks were quite sizable for the time he spent working but he didn't have any income off-season. He was overpaying his mortgage when he had income but when he didn't receive paychecks, he was not making any payments towards the mortgage. He didn't understand that the extra money was not covering the mortgage for the months he didn't make any payments. Once an interpreter got involved, the 2 parties were able to clear up the situation and create a good solution. They opened a savings account, connected it with Anton's mortgage account, and set up automatic transfers in an agreed amount.

Language access in **different industries**



Healthcare

Healthcare providers must make sure that all patients can effectively communicate their symptoms, receive accurate diagnoses and treatment, and understand their treatment plans. Without language resources patients may not receive the care they need, leading to poor health outcomes. For example, a non-native English-speaking patient may not be able to communicate their symptoms effectively, potentially causing a misdiagnosis. But, when a qualified interpreter is present, the communication between the patient and healthcare provider will be clear, ensuring that the patient receives the appropriate care.



Law Enforcement and Legal Services

Language access in law enforcement and legal services is about equal access to justice, fair outcomes, and full participation in legal proceedings. Without access to language services, people who aren't fluent in English may not understand their legal rights or be able to effectively communicate with their lawyer or judge.



Education

U.S. schools have a responsibility to offer language access to families who are not fully proficient in English so they can participate in the educational setting to support their children. Without adequate language access, these families would not be able to participate in meetings with counselors, teachers, and administrators to resolve behavioral, emotional, or academic challenges related to school. For instance, a parent who speaks Spanish as their first language may struggle to understand a discussion related to classroom behavior and be unable to help their child understand the consequences.



Social Services

Social services refer to a broad range of public services, including housing, transportation, and food assistance. Without proper language resources, LEP people may not be able to access the services they need to live a healthy and productive life. For instance, a refugee who speaks Farsi as their first language may not be able to access food assistance because they can't understand the application process in English.



The Private Sector

The private sector also plays a significant role in promoting equity through language access because it includes businesses, corporations, and other non-governmental organizations that provide goods and services to the multilingual public. By providing translation and interpretation services to clients who are people who speak English as a second language, they enable these customers to access the same benefits as the rest of the community.

To drive a successful language access program, organizations must:

- Be committed to learning and understanding other cultures
- Comprehend the consequences of language barriers in school, legal, financial, or medical settings
- Understand the differences between translation and interpretation
- Know what languages are spoken in their community
- Recognize the touchpoints where language barriers exist
- Understand the cost of providing language access services
- Commit to improving language access and designate an owner to drive plans and handle requests

Language access planning

To drive better outcomes in your community, you first need a strategy to provide language access in a meaningful way. This comes in the form of a language access plan. We will walk you through building a plan step-by-step.

What is a language access plan?

A language access plan is a formal policy that outlines how your team will provide communication assistance services to people who are not native English speakers. This plan will help your organization fulfill its legal obligations and make services accessible to all members of the public, regardless of their level of fluency.

It will also give your staff the necessary knowledge and resources to provide language assistance when they need it. Lastly, it will allow your organization to customize language access services to meet the specific needs of your community and identify areas for improvement.

The components of a language access plan include:

- Conducting a needs assessment
- Identifying the key languages & number of speakers
- Defining the services to provide
- Finding linguistic resources
- Managing language access requests
- Training staff on the concepts & processes
- Measuring effectiveness
- Designating a program owner & manager



Figuring out the **languages and situational needs**

What languages do we need to cover?

First, you have to assess the language requirements within your community. Start by identifying the people needing assistance with language whom your organization serves or is likely to encounter. Urban areas typically have greater diversity with immigrant and refugee communities, which means a wider range of spoken languages. For example, in New York City alone, over 200 languages are spoken. On the other hand, suburban and rural areas generally have fewer languages to consider but yet have distinct community needs.

Some resources include:

- › The list of the [top 15 most commonly spoken languages](#) in each state maintained by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- › The Visual Capitalist list of [The Most Commonly Spoken Language in Every US State](#)
- › Business Insider's [snapshot of the most common languages in each state](#).
- › The Modern Language Association's [map shows the distribution of languages spoken in the United States](#). The map is based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS)³.

These can get you big-picture information, but it's important to remember that local requirements may vary. For local specifics, you can:

- › Conduct a community survey to gain a comprehensive understanding of the specific language needs within your community.
- › Tap into useful internal data sources such as call center information, information provided by those requiring your services, and electronic health records.

Find out touchpoints

People with varying levels of English proficiency will need language services at different times and in different ways during their interactions with your organization. Each organization should assess where people interact with the organization and determine what kind of language services would be appropriate at each point of contact.

You will want to make a chart like the example below:

TOUCHPOINT	LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICE
Scheduling services, call centers, hotlines, or information lines	Interpretation Translation (call center scripts)
Reception area (checking in for an appointment)	Translation (forms and signage)
Paperwork	Translation (applications, forms)
Online materials, like websites	Translation
Outreach programs; community events	Interpretation
Advertising or informational materials	Translation (brochures)
In-person or phone appointments	Interpretation

IMMIGRANT PARENTS

Engaging with the schools

In an Oregon school district, non-English speaking parents felt unwelcome and excluded during school-wide parent meetings. They did not enjoy going to those meetings, even when there was an interpreter, because they didn't feel included. As a result, there was a mistaken impression that they didn't care, yet they did care deeply and just were not able to engage. Once the school district was able to provide interpreters in their language and translated materials, the parents felt more comfortable and were able to engage and connect with information related to their kids' educations. Solving the inclusion problem with language access benefits the parents, the school district, the community and the kids.



Defining the scope of **language services** for your organization

Two types of services are usually involved in language access: translation and interpretation. You will probably need to offer both. Let's take a look at what each of these services entails.

Interpretation

Professional bilingual interpreters convert speech from one language to another. Interpretation would come into play whenever a non-native speaker meets with a service provider such as a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher, or a banker.

Your language access plan should outline the type of interpretation you want to offer and describe the qualifications your organization will require of interpreters.

Often, organizations use a combination of approaches to providing interpretation services.

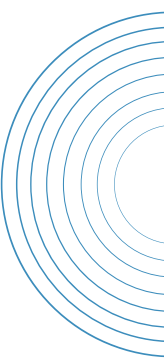
There are **five types of interpretation for our purposes**:

- Simultaneous interpretation (SI)
- Consecutive interpretation
- Over-the-phone interpretation (OPI)
- Whispered interpretation
- On-demand phone interpretation

You need to make sure you have qualified interpreters. Interpreters may be certified or qualified. When an interpreter is certified, it means that they have passed a test that is recognized by a governmental or professional organization that shows competency in two languages. Interpreters who are qualified have been evaluated and considered competent to interpret in at least two languages based on a set of standards or criteria. Note that bilingual family members often are not well equipped to interpret because being fluent does not guarantee competency in specialized terminology. Family dynamics may also complicate a situation where a family member is asked to interpret, especially in highly charged emotional situations like medical emergencies. So, relying on unqualified people can lead to misunderstandings and poor outcomes. Ensuring accurate interpretation is of the highest importance.

Some fields, especially legal and medical, use specialized vocabulary that laypeople don't always understand. To be qualified in these fields, interpreters need training and/or experience to ensure they can accurately interpret these terms. Interpreters in these fields typically require certification.





Translation

Translation focuses on written communication. In translation, a professional linguist converts a text from one language into another. It is often thought of as a one-to-one exchange from one language to another, a literal transfer of meaning from the source language to the target.

To figure out what documents to translate, organizations should consider which documents are “vital” documents, or those that “contain information that is critical for obtaining services and/or benefits.” Vital documents may include:

- Application forms, including those for benefits
- Consent forms, including consent to treat, release of information, or consent to immunize
- Complaint forms
- Legal forms
- Eligibility forms
- Financial payment policies
- Patient rights and responsibilities
- Signage, notices
- Intake/information forms
- Patient instructions

As an organization you must decide based on the importance of the content or event, based on your budget, and based on the law, which points of contact you will provide language services for.

Like interpreters, translators have special qualifications. Many are bilingual, all are linguists, and some have certifications. The [American Translators Association](#) offers a certification that is widely recognized and respected within the translation industry. It serves as a professional credential that demonstrates a translator's competence and expertise. To become ATA-certified, translators need to meet certain eligibility criteria and pass a rigorous examination.

Multimedia

If people who speak English as a second language need to view videos related to your organization's services, then you may need to consider subtitles and voiceover. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Subtitling is less expensive, and there are some tools that automate transcription and translation to make it relatively fast and cost-efficient. Human narration, especially by a trained actor, is very expensive. However, most organizations achieve their goals with experienced bilingual narrators.

Tools that use Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) can help create subtitles by generating initial transcripts of spoken content. Several video editing software and online platforms provide ASR-based subtitling features. These transcripts are used as the basis for creating subtitles. Then translators generate subtitles in the required languages. It is even possible to use machine translation (MT), but results will not be accurate, especially for languages with complex grammar or specialized terminology. Human review and editing are always necessary to make sure the results are of high quality.

Why cultural competence and emotional IQ are critical

Helping people with language access isn't just about changing words from one language to another. It's about helping people from a different culture access services and get the help they need. Translators and interpreters are often cultural liaisons between two different cultures, and they must know the culture, preferences, and experiences of the people they are trying to help. Cultural intelligence (knowing the client's culture) and emotional intelligence (understanding people and how they feel and think) are critical to providing effective language access services.

Identify resources and cost

As part of a language access program, you need to know what resources you need and what those resources will cost. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you have enough volume that it makes sense to hire a bilingual nurse or case worker? And how much would that cost?
- Is the bilingual receptionist you have on staff enough to cover the needs of your clientele?
- Do you have so many languages to represent that the only feasible option is to partner with an agency?
- Or can you outsource jobs to linguists for a limited number of languages?

For each language, find out the costs of:

- freelance interpreters in each language (often hourly, per session, or by full/half day)
- professional translators (usually per word, varying by language)
- full-time bilingual practitioner to do the job you require plus provide language skills (We will provide you with resources on finding linguists below).

RAQUEL

Empowering entrepreneurship

Raquel, a young man from Colombia, began a custodial services business in the United States and needed a loan for equipment and banking support for payments and payroll processing. The bank she chose provided her with all materials in Spanish, and the banker was a Spanish speaker himself. Raquel was able to set up the accounts and finances that she needed for her business to thrive.



Training your staff on **language access**

An aware and educated staff provides the best way to ensure that non-English speakers receive adequate support and services. It is essential to involve all personnel who interact with consumers, such as receptionists, security guards, medical assistants, and clinicians.

Staff training can include information on language access laws and regulations, how to identify language needs, how to request interpretation or translation services, and how to work effectively with interpreters and translators.

Staff training can also include cultural competency training to help staff better understand the needs and experiences of non-English speakers. This can include information on cultural norms, values, and beliefs, as well as strategies for communicating effectively across language and cultural barriers.

Also, everyone on your team needs to know what their responsibilities are regarding language access. Determine which staff members are responsible for each aspect of your plan and train them according to their newly defined, clearly outlined roles.

You can also incorporate communication and language services training as part of the onboarding process for new hires. And don't forget to communicate to your staff any policy, process, or resource changes that have been made.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a green top with a white patterned collar, is standing in profile and writing on a whiteboard with a blue marker. The whiteboard has several papers pinned to it, including a yellow one with a blue border. In the background, there are orange circular patterns hanging from the ceiling. The foreground shows the back of a person's head on the left and a person's ear on the right.

Topics for staff training on language access

- Understanding the importance of providing language assistance services. This includes recognizing the barriers faced by these people and the impact that effective communication can have on their access to services and overall well-being.
- Communicating effectively and respectfully with people who are not native speakers of English. This should cover active listening, using plain language, and being mindful of cultural differences.
- Your organization's language access policies and procedures. This includes understanding the law, what services your organization will provide, and how the community can access them.
- Requesting services and working with interpreters and translators: Staff should be trained on the procedures for requesting and collaborating with interpreters and understand the logistics of the work.
- Availability and location of translated information. This could include translated brochures, signage, consent forms, and other relevant materials.

I Speak Cards

It's a good practice to provide "I Speak" language cards in a variety of languages to allow people to point to the language he or she understands. It is one of the best ways to identify what language an interpreter will need to speak to communicate effectively with that patron. They are also called language identification cards. Organizations should create "I speak" cards that represent all the languages most commonly spoken in their area.



I SPEAK

- ☐ Spanish / Español
- ☐ Bengali / বাংলা
- ☐ Mandarin / 普通话 / 普通話
- ☐ Cantonese / 广东话 / 廣東話
- ☐ Haitian Creole / Kreyòl Ayisyen
- ☐ French / Français
- ☐ Arabic / العربية
- ☐ Russian / Русский
- ☐ Polish / Polski
- ☐ Other: _____

Please call an interpreter.

The role of the language access coordinator

Many organizations designate someone to drive the language access plan, oversee language access requests, and ensure compliance with language access policies. This coordinator serves as a central point of contact for language-related inquiries and manages the coordination of language services.

There are various job descriptions for language access coordinators, but responsibilities generally include:

- Overseeing the organization's language access plan
- Responding to questions about the program
- Advocating for language access initiatives
- Maintaining a database of qualified interpreters and translators
- Training staff on how to use language assistance services when serving customers
- Coordinating and managing requests for interpretation and translation
- Managing a budget to provide language assistance services, and
- Regularly assessing and improving the language assistance program.

GIANG

Resolving school truancy

Giang, a Vietnamese-speaking child, skipped school enough times that the school sent the parents an email message to ask about his well-being. However, the parents didn't understand the automatic email and phone messages and were unable to connect with the details of the absences, the consequences of them, and who to talk with to resolve them. Once the language access coordinator got involved, the parents received communications in Vietnamese and were able to understand and resolve the absences and get their child back in school.



Technology solutions for language access

Technology can also play a role in improving language access in local communities. Video conferencing technology enables on-demand video remote interpretation (VRI) services. This can be particularly helpful in emergencies or in situations where in-person interpretation services are not available.

For written materials, organizations can also use machine translation (MT) to provide basic translations. While MT is not perfect and is not be appropriate for all situations, it can be a useful supplement to professional translation services.

Job portals are very useful when requesting jobs, looking for a resource, and handling logistics. When you have the volume to warrant partnering with a language access vendor, ask if their offering includes a job scheduling portal.



How to find linguistic resources

There are several reliable sources where you can find professional linguists.

1. Language Services Providers (LSP)

These vendors have networks of qualified translators and interpreters, often in dozens of languages and various industries (i.e., a French legal translator). You can contact selected LSPs and request proposals or quotes for the services you need. Provide detailed information about the scope of work, including the type and volume of content to be translated, the expected turnaround time, and any specific requirements or industry-specific terminology.

2. Freelance platforms

Online platforms such as Upwork, Freelancer, and Fiverr connect businesses with freelance linguists. These platforms allow you to post your requirements and receive proposals. You can review their profiles, ratings, and previous client feedback to make an informed decision.

3. Professional associations

Many countries have professional translation associations that maintain directories of certified translators. Three examples include

- The American Translators Association (ATA) is a professional hub for linguists in the U.S. and provides a certification program for interpreters and translators who are members.
- The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) is an international association that represents conference interpreters. It sets professional standards and promotes the highest quality interpretation services for conferences and meetings around the world.
- The National Association of Community Interpreters (NACI) is a professional association in the United States that focuses on community interpretation. It supports the professional development of community interpreters, advocates for best practices, and offers resources and training opportunities.

These directories often allow you to search for linguists based on language pair, specialization, and location.

4. Personal recommendations

Seek recommendations from colleagues, industry peers, or professional networks. This is a valuable way to find translators who have been tried and tested by others.

5. Online directories

Websites like [ProZ.com](https://www.proz.com) and [TranslatorsCafé.com](https://www.translatorscafe.com) offer searchable databases of linguists worldwide. These directories allow you to filter based on their language combination, credentials, specialization, and location.



6. Localization and translation conferences

Attend industry conferences or events related to translation and localization. These events provide an opportunity to network with professional translators, language service providers, and language industry experts. They also offer loads of sessions to learn about language access and other topics in the industry. ATA holds a big yearly conference that brings language access stakeholders together.

7. Social media platforms

You can use social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook groups, or Twitter to connect with translators or join relevant professional groups. These platforms often have dedicated groups or communities where translators showcase their expertise and availability. One example is the [Certified Translation Professional Group](#).

When sourcing translators and interpreters, it's essential to look at their qualifications, experience, language proficiency, subject matter expertise, and previous client feedback. Most linguists are bilingual professionals with college degrees in their craft and/or a certification. As mentioned before, results can be poor if you use linguists with fewer qualifications. You can consider conducting small test projects or requesting sample translations to evaluate their skills before committing to larger translation projects.

OMID

Treating mental health issues

A teenage refugee from Afghanistan, Omid, was struggling with insomnia, stomach pains, and anxiety. His doctor was unable to get clear details from him in order to help him resolve the mental and physical health issues that were hurting his quality of life. Omid, whose English is emerging but is not yet fluent, didn't understand the questions and felt uncomfortable talking with her because she was an unmarried woman with uncovered hair. Once a bilingual male interpreter came in, Omid and the doctor were able to communicate clearly through him, and the doctor was able to prescribe medicine to help Omid. Importantly, Omid was able to get clear instructions about how to take the medicine.

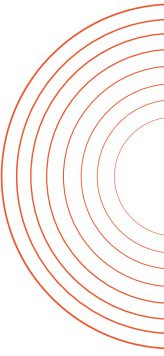


Handling **language access** requests

Once you have your program defined and set up, you need a system for handling translation and interpretation requests. You will :

1. Establish efficient request channels. Implement user-friendly channels for job requests. This can include dedicated phone lines, email addresses, or online request forms. Make these channels easily accessible, making sure you can provide prompt responses.
2. Train staff on how to request these services. All staff members, including receptionists, customer service representatives, and providers/practitioners, need training on how to handle language access requests, including knowing what information to provide when making a job request. If your vendor provides a portal, you can request that they train your staff on it.
3. Designate a contact for questions and support. This could be your language access coordinator, but it could also be a vendor contact project manager or scheduler.





Measuring the success of **language access efforts**

Measure the success of language access efforts to make sure your organization is meeting the needs of people who speak English as a second language. Metrics that organizations can use include the number of language access requests, client satisfaction surveys, and feedback from staff and community members.

Here are some approaches to measuring the effectiveness of language access programs:

1. Language service utilization

Track and analyze the use of language services within your organization. This can include monitoring the number of interpretation requests, translation volumes, and the frequency of language assistance provided. Increasing utilization rates can indicate improved accessibility and effectiveness of your program.

2. User satisfaction surveys

Conduct surveys or collect feedback from people who have used your language access services. Gather their feedback on the quality, timeliness, and overall satisfaction. This feedback can help identify areas for improvement as well as user satisfaction levels.

3. Accuracy and quality assessment

Evaluate the quality of language services by tracking the performance of interpreters and translators. Implement quality control measures, such as random sample evaluations or feedback loops, to make sure that the language services meet the desired standards.

4. Compliance with language access policies

Track compliance with legal requirements and organizational policies, such as the availability of interpretation and translation services, to measure the effectiveness of your program in meeting regulatory and internal standards.

5. Outcome measurement

Define specific outcomes that align with your organization's goals and objectives. This could include improved patient or customer satisfaction, increased access to services, reduced language-related errors, or enhanced cultural competency. In a school setting you can measure graduation rates, GPAs, etc., to show the long-term effects of language access programs. Track and evaluate these outcomes to assess the impact of your initiative.

6. Cost-effectiveness analysis

Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of your language access program by analyzing the resources allocated to language services compared to the outcomes achieved.

7. Feedback from staff and stakeholders

Ask for feedback from staff members involved in providing language access services, as well as from other stakeholders within the organization.

Lastly, to continue to improve the way you serve your non-English speaking community, you should regularly review and evaluate your language access processes and protocols. Identify areas for improvement, continuously update training materials, streamline workflows, and adopt new technologies or resources to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of your program.

STANLY

Getting past trauma

Stanly, a man from Poland, was a first responder at the World Trade Center tragedy. Because of his experience and the aftermath, he developed PTSD and began to see a therapist for help. He did speak English at a basic level, but because the subjects were so personal to him he found it very hard to communicate in English. Once we brought in a bilingual and emotionally intelligent Polish interpreter, Stanly found it much easier to express himself at the emotional level necessary to begin processing his feelings. Over several months he was able to enjoy the sessions, work through his trauma, and begin to heal, and as a result, he began to succeed and thrive again at work and in his personal life.

Moving forward

Our community members who speak English as a second language need and deserve full access to governmental, legal, medical/health, social, and educational services. Lack of English language skills can be a huge barrier to receiving help and services, and the consequences of mistakes in understanding can be significant. To thrive, they must have access to materials and services that are delivered in a language they fully comprehend. Aside from enabling access to services, providing language assistance to people who speak English as a second language promotes inclusivity, reduces instances of discrimination, and provides equal access to opportunities.

By assessing the diverse needs of the community and implementing a well-designed language access plan, organizations can make lives better for members of their communities who are not fluent in English.

How **Mindlink** can help

You don't have to do any of this important work alone. We stand by to help you with language access planning and language access services.

Specifically, we help schools, governments, healthcare organizations, and non-profits provide people who speak English as a second language with information in their own language through translation and interpretation services. We believe that effective communication is vital and that with improved access to high-quality language services, community members can resolve problems, learn, connect, feel included, experience equity, and thrive.

We also provide language access strategy services, such as needs assessments, quality audits, language access plan development, training material creation, and process optimization.

Our job-scheduling platform, LinguistLink:

- › Quickly connects stakeholders with qualified, vetted translators and interpreters
- › Manages scheduling and logistics
- › Empowers our clients with visibility, control, and customized options
- › Provides analytics and tracking

At Mindlink, our dedicated and talented people design flexible and comprehensive solutions for each client to help them better serve their non-English-speaking communities.

Connect with us [here](#) to talk about how to serve your community with language access solutions.



Terminology in this ebook

TERM	DEFINITION
English Language Learners (ELL)	People learning the English language with any level of proficiency.
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	People who are not yet fluent in English.
English as a Second Language (ESL)	People speaking English whose native language is one other than English.
Bilingual	Fluent in 2 languages.
Translation	Refers to written communication. The faithful conversion of text from one language to another.
Interpretation	<p>Refers to oral communication. The conversion of spoken text from one language to another, sometimes instant (simultaneous) and sometimes in a delayed fashion (consecutive).</p> <p>Types of interpretation include: On-Site Interpretation (OSI), Over-the-Phone Interpretation (OPI), and Video Remote Interpretation (VRI).</p>
Meaningful access	The concept that receiving information in your native language is impactful, helpful, and necessary for people to thrive.
Linguist	Highly trained and possibly certified bilingual professional providing translation or interpretation services.

References and resources

For more information about the topics we discuss in this book, you can check out the following resources.

www.dhs.gov/language-access

www.lep.gov/language-access-planning

www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/language-access-translation-and-interpretation-policies-and-practices

www.dhs.gov/language-access

[HHS Office for Civil Rights Language Access Annual Progress Report](#)



www.mindlinkresources.com



1-360-254-7711



hello@mindlinkresources.com



www.linkedin.com/company/mindlink-resources/