

# Language

# Access



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## We hope this can be:

A set of evolving tools for Language Access in your municipality or organization. We encourage you to treat this as adaptive knowledge that can change over time.

A connection to a broader network of [Language Access practitioners in MA and beyond.](#)

**A source of inspiration for celebrating our multilingual and multicultural communities. We want every person in Massachusetts to take part in their community. This means being able to participate across language and ability.**

# Overview of Language Access Guide

1. This project was developed in partnership with the [Blue Hill Community Health Alliance](#), as well as with the [Town of Arlington](#), [City of Beverly](#), [Town of Milton](#), and [Town of Randolph](#). To learn more about the project's first year, its **partners and project recommendations**, [click here](#).

To join the **Language Access Roundtable Network**, [click here](#).

2. To learn more about **Language Access & Procurement**, [click here](#).
3. To learn more about **Language Access & ADA Accessibility**, [click here](#).
4. To learn more about **Defining Emerging Needs for Language Access**, [click here](#).
5. To learn more about **Plain Language**, [click here](#).
6. To learn about Incorporating **Language Access into your Events**, [click here](#).
7. To Learn about **Language Access Technology Tools**, [click here](#).
8. To learn about how to set up a **Language Access Plan**, [click here](#).
9. To learn about Investing in **Sustainable Language Access Practices** [click here](#).
10. To learn more about **Language Access & Diversity, Equity & Inclusion work**, [click here](#).
11. To learn more about **Language Access & Immigration**, [click here](#).
12. To learn about advocating for **Language Access through policy (local & state)**, [click here](#).

**Not sure where to start?  
Too much information here?**

**Reach out to:**

**Sasha Parodi** (sparodi@mapc.org) or **Najee Nunnally** (nnunnally@mapc.org)

**To talk about your Language Access journey!**

# Language Access Overview





## What is Language Access?

Language is fundamental to our connection with one another. Communication is key to taking part in society and in public processes. Language Access at its core is working with the person across from you to understand each other.

**Language Access is the practice of designing public process, services and communication that:**

- Are offered in plain language;
- Include multiple languages (translation, interpretation or in-language facilitation, multiple modes of access etc);
- Meet people's access needs (closed captions, sign language interpretation, etc);
- Honor and celebrate people's cultures.

## Language Access allows us to:

- Have a shared foundation for communication with others;
- Support people in accessing services they need;
- Support people in taking part in a public or community process.

We hope the tools in this guide can serve as building blocks for your Language Access practice. However, **tools will never be perfect**, and they will not work for every single person. **It is important to adapt to people's needs even when we don't have the right tools to support them.** Kindness, care, and creativity can go a long way. Even if you don't have the right resources available, you can work to figure out a solution for the moment. When you work together to figure out what someone needs, where they're trying to go, and what they are saying, you can go a long way!

We also understand that establishing language access can be difficult. **If you can't make all these changes – identify ones that feel doable.** While we strive for improvement, we aim to not let perfect be the enemy of good. This is a collaborative and long-term practice. Rather than perfection, we seek commitment, consistency and care. These are the ingredients for fostering multilingual community participation.

**Culture and disability rights are fundamental to Language Access.** Language Access is effective when it:

- Supports people in understanding each other;
- Supports people interacting in ways that are respectful of their cultural practices;
- Removes barriers to participation, including meeting people's accessibility needs.

MAPC defines Language Access within a **Language Justice Framework**.

**We consider Language Justice to mean:**

- Every person can meaningfully take part in all aspects of daily life.
- Our systems and processes consistently adapt to people's needs.
- Every person can not only act but lead in their community in the language and format that works best for them.

***Language Access is the baseline upon which Language Justice is possible.*** However, ***we do not want to stop at access.*** Language Justice, takes us beyond providing interpretation and translation services to:

- Developing trust with people who speak different languages.
- Creating opportunities to celebrate people's cultures.
- Create systems of support. These systems could include (but are not limited to):

#### **Immigration Services:**

- Many municipalities in the region have immigrant services offices. These offices offer a range of services to immigrants in their communities.
- MAPC convenes municipal staff and partners who are supporting immigrants in their communities. If you would like to learn, [please reach out to us](#) and we will follow up with you.

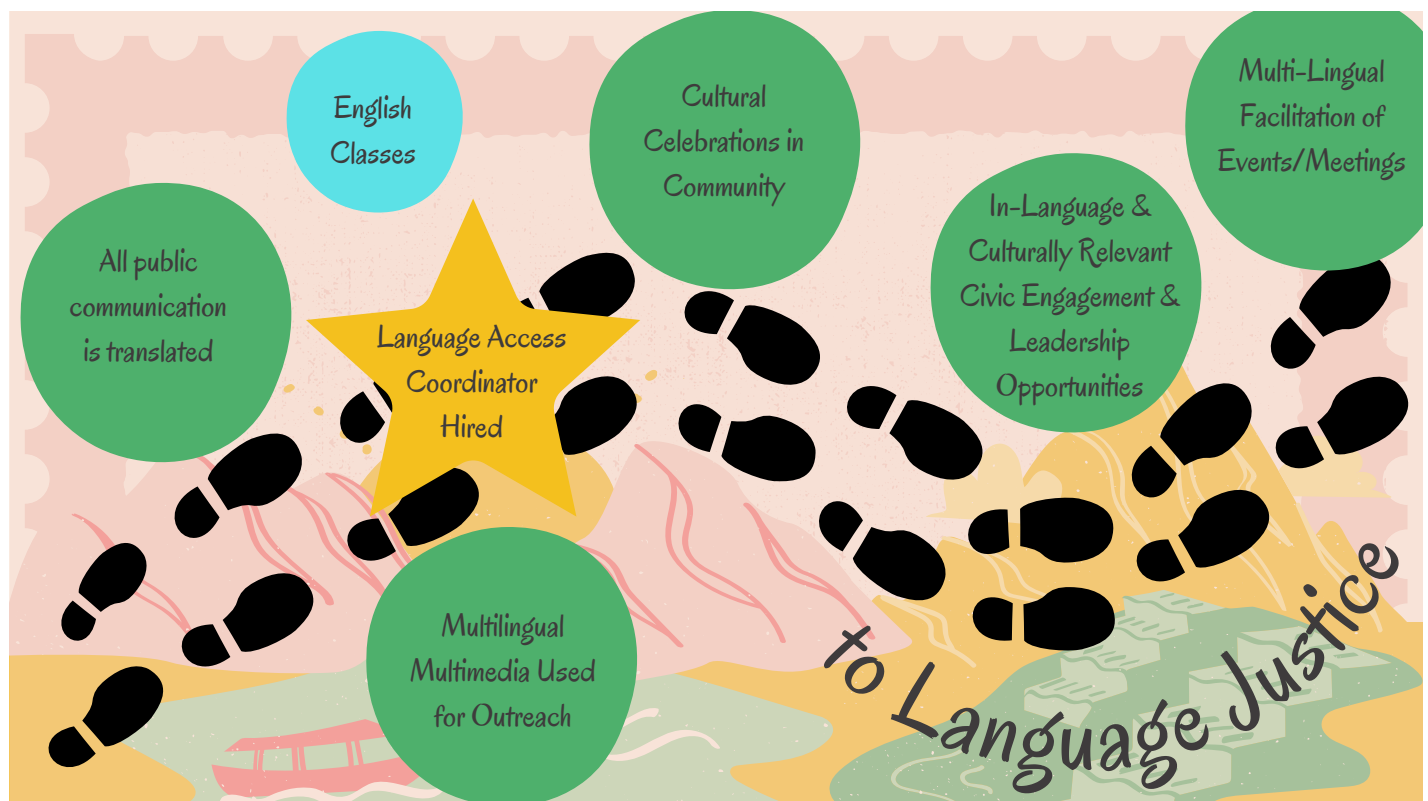
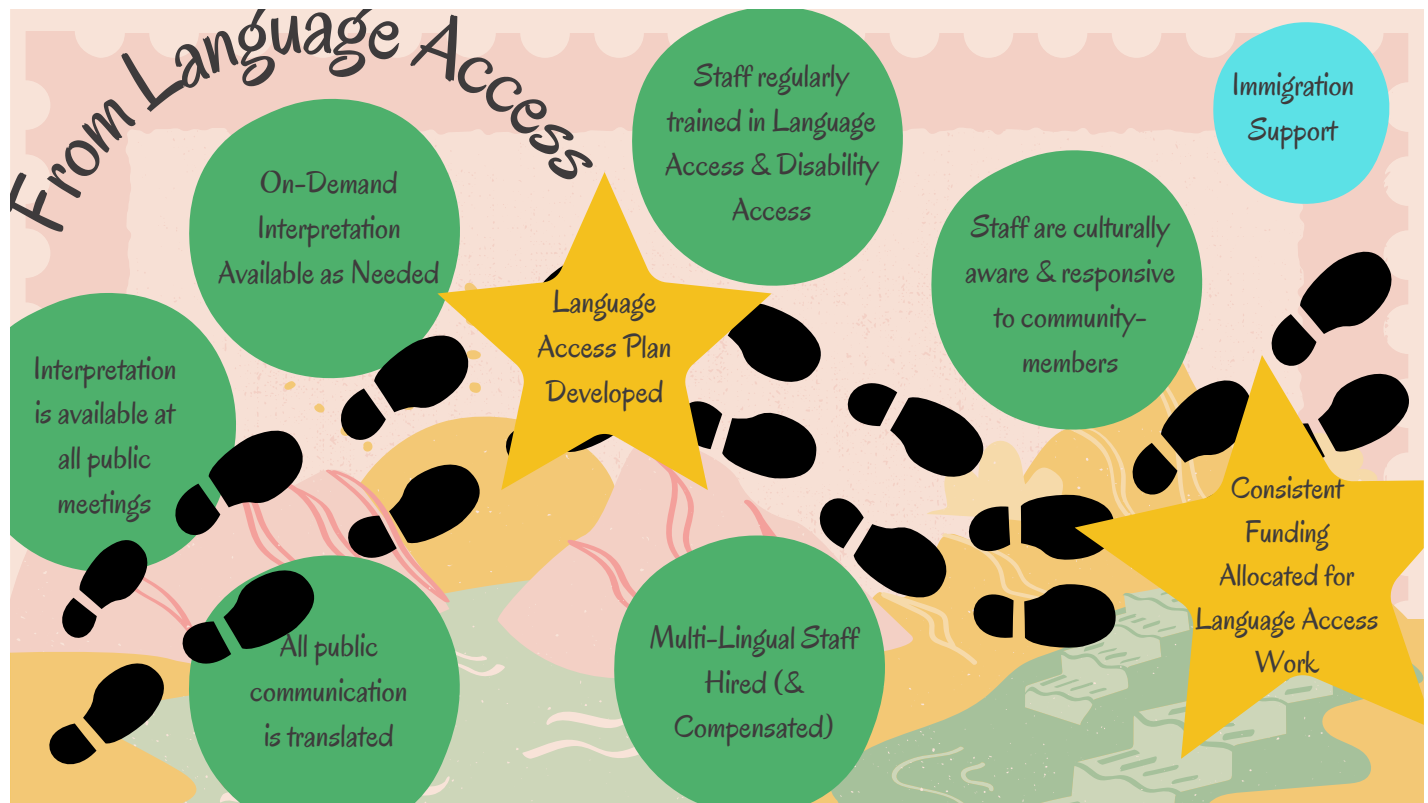
#### **English Classes**

- The MA Board of Library Commissioners maintains a list of Libraries in Massachusetts [that offer English Classes](#).

Investing in building the skills of community members through:

#### **Resident Community Interpreter Training**

- The City of Quincy and Quincy Asian Resources have been running a Community Interpreter Program. This is a collaboration with Cross Cultural Communication Systems. To learn more about this, [click here](#).



## Language Access Terms

Before we dive into the ins and outs of Language Access we would like to establish a few key definitions:

<b>Translation</b>	“The process of taking written text and transferring it from one language to another.” <sup>1</sup>
<b>Interpretation</b>	“The act of converting spoken words from one language to another in real-time. [This is] usually performed by a professional interpreter” <sup>2</sup>
<b>Simultaneous Interpretation</b>	“A mode of interpreting in which the speaker makes a speech and the interpreter reformulates the speech into a language his audience understands at the same time (or simultaneously).” <sup>3</sup>
<b>Consecutive Interpretation</b>	“In this mode of interpretation, speakers deliver their speeches in complete passages or chunks before pausing to allow the interpreter to translate their words.” <sup>4</sup>
<b>CART Services</b>	“CART Service” means Communication Access Realtime Translation Service. CART Service provides instantaneous translation of what is being said into visual print display so that it can be read (instead of heard). CART Service is one means of communication access for deaf or hard of hearing individuals who read English fluently.” <sup>5</sup>
<b>ASL</b>	“American Sign Language (ASL) is a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken <a href="#">languages</a> , with grammar that differs from English. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face. It is the primary language of many North Americans who are deaf and hard of hearing and is used by some hearing people as well.” <sup>6</sup>
<b>In-Language Facilitation</b>	The act of offering facilitation in languages other than English. Often materials will be translated from English for this session, however the facilitation itself will happen entirely in a language other than English. Any feedback from this session will then need to be translated back into English to be incorporated into the work
<b>Plain Language</b>	Clear and effective communication that is easy to understand. The target reading level is 8th grade. <sup>7</sup> As much as possible, this guide reads at mostly an 8th or 9th grade level. Content from other sources (including these other definitions), may read at higher reading levels.

Not all translations will be accurate or specific to people’s cultures or dialects. This is why it is important to check translations and interpretations when possible. For more information on this, please [click here](#).

<b><u>Deaf</u></b>	Describes someone who has partial or total hearing loss. When someone identifies as deaf in the United States, they will generally use American Sign Language (ASL), however this does depend on each individual person's preference.
<b>Oral Deaf</b>	Someone who is deaf, but prefers verbal communication and speechreading to sign language. Oral deaf individuals may use hearing aids or cochlear implants.
<b><u>Deaf-Blind</u></b>	A deaf-blind individual may have no or very little useable sight or hearing. Some deaf-blind individuals may use tactile ASL, placing their hands on top of other ASL users- or ASL interpreter's - hands to 'read' what is being said, and responding in ASL
<b>Late Deafened</b>	Describes someone has lost all of their hearing any time after the age of six
<b>Hard of Hearing</b>	Is the appropriate way to describe individuals with hearing loss that develops any time after the age of 6. Hearing loss may vary from mid to profound, degree of loss impacts communicative abilities.
<b><u>Culture</u></b>	<p>The Cambridge English Dictionary defines culture as: "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time". We would also note that culture often drives people's behavior and forms of interaction. This can in particular impact people's use of language (even when we may be speaking the same language!). It is important we foster multilingual environments that also welcome people culturally. We can't only translate our words and expect people to adapt to the rest. We must also learn to bridge between cultures and develop common ground for shared understanding.</p> <p>1. <b>Belonging</b> – the Othering &amp; Belonging institute describes belonging as: "For us, belonging describes values and practices where no person is left out of our circle of concern. Belonging means more than having just access, it means having a meaningful voice and the opportunity to participate in the design of political, social, and cultural structures. Belonging includes the right to both contribute and make demands upon society and political institutions."</p> <p>Belonging in the context of language justice means that people are not only included, but have tools for participation.</p>

***For more Language Access definitions, take a look at the [Office for Access to Justice Language Access Plan](#).***



# Language Access Key Takeaways

If you read no other part of this guide, we hope that you walk away with these key points:

1. Language Access impacts **everyone** and your Language Access work should **consider all people**. *This includes:*
  - *People with disabilities,*
  - *People with varying literacy levels,*
  - *People who speak different languages,*
  - *People with varied cultural contexts* (even within the same language).
2. **Funding** is fundamental for sustainable language access.
3. Consider **all available data** and make a plan to gather more data over time. Language Access is a moving target!
4. **Plain language** is a fundamental component of language access.
5. **Technology** can help broaden language access, use the tools that are available to you!
6. Language Access requires a specialized skillset. This means **hiring staff who have that skillset** and providing them with **support**. This also means offering ongoing **training and resources to all staff, so that they can build those skills**.
7. Language Access implementation needs to happen across municipal departments. **Everybody** needs to uphold the practice in their respective work.
8. Speaking a language and translating or interpreting a language are different skills. This has implications for how **multilingual staff receive support and compensation**.
9. **Collaboration** helps us all strengthen our language access practices across the region. We learn from each other and work together.
10. We need to **adapt and expand our cultural norms**. This allows us to **include** the various cultures of our communities.
11. Language access is about how we **build long term relationship** with one another. It asks us to develop clear ways to communicate with and understand each other.

# 1. Project Summary & Key Findings

According to the Migration Policy Institute, 1 in 10 people in Massachusetts speak English “less than very well.”<sup>1</sup> All people have a right to adequate services and opportunities for public participation. In multilingual communities this requires language access. However, many municipalities have small budgets and low staff capacity. This makes providing language access challenging. The multi-municipal language access project emerged to explore these challenges.

## The MAPC Language Access Project was launched in September 2022. The project aimed to:

- Offer *municipal resources* in multiple languages.
- Better understand the *needs of non-English language speakers* in the region.
- Develop a definition of *language access* that includes *disability access*.
- Build a *Language Access Network* among municipal staff in the region.
- Explore sustainable ways to provide consistent and meaningful language services.
- Identify *language access recommendations* that municipalities across the region can put in place.

## The project included:

- Monthly *project partner meetings*. These meetings focused on language access progress in each partner municipality. This included: goals, successes and challenges;
- Monthly roundtable discussions on various topics of Language Access. Any person working on language access could participate in these discussions. These roundtables served as a space for: peer connection, resource sharing and collaborative problem-solving.

**The Roundtables will be continuing in 2024.**

If you are interested in joining the Language Access Roundtables, please [click here](#).

- Procuring translations for key municipal documents in project partner communities.
- *Focus Groups with Speakers of Languages Other Than English (LOTE)*.
  - As a regional planning agency we learned firsthand the challenge of coordinating engagement in other languages. Especially when we did not have relationships or trust built with community members. We are currently in the process of hosting several focus groups. We look forward to sharing our takeaways from these conversations here. We believe it is necessary that people who are most affected by language access inform this work. Staff and service providers who work on Language Access and/or are multilingual have provided input on these resources.

## Project Key Findings:

- When we say language – we mean **communication**. This includes thinking about:
  - **different uses of the English language**,
  - **differences across English-speaking cultures and communities**,
  - **disability access**, and **multilingual access** (to services, events, public space, etc.).
- Municipalities need to **invest** in money, staff time, and staff support to establish language access.
- In many communities, Language Access emerges from one or two champions. They can get programs started, but they need support from leadership to invest in long term solutions.
- It is **fundamental to have dedicated Language Access staff. These staff can develop language practices and build up staff skills**. This person should not be responsible for providing services across the municipality/organization. Rather, they should be supporting each team or department within a municipality in establishing their own language access programming.
- **Multilingual staff** should not be expected to take on interpretation for community members. Interpretation is additional work that staff should be compensated and trained for. If a staff person takes on interpretation - this should be part of their established workload.
- Language access includes **cultural access**. This involves developing: content; outreach; service provision; and opportunities for engagement - that culturally align and/or are relevant to LOTE speakers and/or residents more broadly.
- **Language access is not optional. It is fundamental to the wellbeing of residents in the region.**

## Who were our partners?



Town of Arlington	City of Beverly	Town of Milton	Town of Randolph	Blue Hills Community Health Alliance
<p><b>Jillian Harvey</b>, Diversity, Equity &amp; Inclusion Director</p> <p><b>Teresa Marzilli</b>, Community Outreach &amp; Engagement Coordinator</p>	<p><b>Joscelyn Ruelle-Kersker</b>, Chief of Staff to Mayor Cahill</p> <p><b>Wangari Fahari</b>, Diversity, Equity &amp; Inclusion Director</p>	<p><b>Caroline Kinsella</b>, Health Director</p> <p><b>Karolyn Ho</b> Health Agent Bilingual/ Vietnamese</p>	<p><b>Michelle Tyler</b>, Planning Director</p>	<p><b>Ashley Stockwell</b>, Program Director</p>

## Arlington

*We credit this project with being the catalyst for more comprehensive and intensive language access work. Learning about key pieces of language access planning in the monthly roundtables, such as procurement, emphasizing disability access and CART services, building relationships with schools and community organizations was key to where we are now. The other key resource that this project offered was a chance to learn with and from other municipalities, both in our core team and at the roundtable discussions. We had many exciting developments that were fostered through this project; we held our first Lunar New Year Celebration and Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration, implemented a translator device pilot project in key departments, increased trainings in cultural humility, and explored language access technology. I would say at this point we have a good grounding in best practices and a clearer vision for the way forward. Next steps for Arlington include implementing LA resources such as Lexikey and Pocketalk (translator device) that are available to all employees, continuing to strengthen newcomer support and cultural celebrations, and continue to work to create a unified language access plan. As the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Division, our hope is to help the Town of Arlington develop a foundation of Language Access so we can move towards Language Justice together as a community.*

- Jillian Harvey & Teresa Marzilli

## Beverly

*The City of Beverly will continue to increase access to government resources and services for people who use languages other than English or have at least one disability. The office for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging together with the ADA Office will support the City in this work.*

*Our goal is to support City departments in through:*

- 1. Interpreter Services Policy: It is the policy of the City of Beverly that sign language interpreters will be provided upon request to any person needing interpreter services in order to participate in any meeting, program, or activity of the City of Beverly. Translation technology training is provided to City staff to ensure consistency and effective communication across departments.*
- 2. Assistive Listening Device Assurances: It is the policy of the City of Beverly that assistive listening devices will be provided upon request to persons needing such devices to participate in programs, services, and activities of the City of Beverly. The assistive listening devices are available in the City Council Chambers, the Beverly Public Library, and the Council on Aging.*

### Goals Moving Forward

- Converting the City's documents into 5 of the most spoken languages in Beverly. Translating documents that reflect the meaning of the original text considering cultural context. Working with qualified individuals and businesses to provide this service.*
- Coordinating and sustaining language access engagement sessions and other focus groups*
- Identifying the needs of those who use languages other than English and implementing action steps for increasing access to City Hall.*
- Plain language editing.*
- Connecting with other municipalities to dive deeper into various case studies to share experiences.*
- Developing impactful partnerships with Beverly Public Schools and Community Partners across various sectors that support the advancement of language access for City of Beverly's residents*
- Meaningful cultural event programming for people who use languages other than English*

-Wangari Fahari

## Milton

*As the Milton Health Director, I enjoyed participating in monthly language roundtable discussions about communication strategies and conversations related to services towns/cities throughout the State are providing for their community residents. Challenges and solutions were highlighted as well as translation and interpreter resources. Milton's resource guide links families and youth to mental health, substance use and trauma hotlines and was translated into Haitian Creole, Chinese, Spanish and French thanks to this Language Access Grant Project. One of Milton's goals moving forward would be to have a more thorough assessment of the Milton Town Hall Services that may be provided to support our residents through new communication outreach and inclusion. I would like to see some basic Standard Operating Procedures created that would guide Town Departments with translation and communication opportunities, in an effort to connect with people within our community. - Caroline Kinsella*

## Randolph

*While Randolph is one of the most diverse communities on the south shore, it has no formalized approach to language access in municipal services and programs. Far too frequently, staff and residents are frustrated in their attempts to communicate critical information and be understood. While we have acknowledged the need to address those challenges, we have also been daunted at the significant efforts of undertaking such a task. The collaboration of communities working with the team at MAPC on the Language Access Project has served as the catalyst for our organization. Between monthly partner discussions and quarterly subject specific round tables, the project has provided a foundation on which the Town can begin to develop a comprehensive approach to ensuring that Randolph develops sufficient infrastructure to support residents and help ensure they have access to public information, government services and programs in a language and method that serves them best. We believe that Language Access is a fundamental requirement for municipal processes; a point of entry to longer term equity practices that can create inclusive communities. - Michelle Tyler*

## Community Health Network Areas

*As one of the state's Community Health Network Areas (CHNA), the Blue Hills Community Health Alliance (CHNA 20) streamlines regional work toward a shared vision of healthy, resilient, and equitable communities. We serve 13 communities on the South Shore, including project partners Milton and Randolph. As Language Access is an identified as a priority in our region, CHNA 20 is proud to support the MA Municipal Language Access Practitioner's Network through ongoing participation and funding for resident focus groups. Our goal moving forward is to invite additional municipalities to join the Network and support them in their pursuit of sustainable Language Access plans, policies, and personnel. We look forward to continuing to participate in Network project partner and roundtable meetings and helping implement identified recommendations. - Ashley Stockwell*



## 2. Where are we going?

### Recommendations for Implementing Language Access in Your Communities:

These recommendations come from research and peer learning. ***Please note that these recommendations prioritize steps necessary to establishing Language Access.*** They do not cover everything a community can do for long-term, meaningful multilingual inclusion.

#### Identify your Language Access Need:

- It is important to identify what Languages other than English may be spoken in your community. The census can be a good place to start. For a local perspective, here are a few ways to determine Language Access needs in your community:
  - Local health center data,
  - Schools data,
  - Neighborhood by neighborhood intake assessments,
  - Data from local service providers and community based partners,

***To learn more about defining thresholds for Language Access, [click here](#).***

#### Develop a municipal (or organizational) Language Access Plan

A Language Access Plan is the blueprint for implementing Language Access in your work.

***To learn more about Language Access Plans, [click here](#).***

#### Develop & Pass a Language Access Ordinance

Policy is a very helpful tool for accountability and implementation. This is especially true when working with people who may not be fully bought in to the need for Language Access.

Passing an ordinance can be a helpful step to:

- Ensuring that departments in your municipality are implementing Language Access
- Standardizing and implementing Language Access best practices
- Allocating municipal (or organizational) funds towards Language Access
- Hiring roles to focus on Language Access
- For examples of Language Access Ordinances, please see:
  - [Boston's Language Access ordinance](#)
  - [Cambridge's Language Access ordinance](#)

***To learn more about Language Access & Policy, [click here](#).***

## Dedicate funds for Language Access in the Municipal (or Organizational) Budget:

- Language Access – and certainly Language Justice - is not possible without the money to support it. For this reason, each municipality and/or organization should consider how they budget for Language Access. This should include:
  - Funds for full-time positions focused on Language Access (at minimum one per municipality),
  - Funds for translation and interpretation costs for public processes,
  - Funds for relationship-building with LOTE communities through engagement, culturally relevant events, etc.,
  - Funds for research & evaluation on Language Access needs in the municipality.

***We know that Language Access can be costly, and it is an investment that requires serious consideration.*** We also know it costs more to deal with the consequences from the absence of services. Often taxpayer dollars are going to lengthy court or support processes, which would not have been necessary if Language Access had been offered in the first place. Investing in Language Access is investing directly into our own communities. For example, providing Language Services to Immigrant-owned businesses can help them thrive. That success brings money back to your community

To learn more about Investment in **Sustainable Language Access**, [click here](#).

## Hire a Language Access Team:

- A Language Access Team is typically responsible for the Language Access Plan. A team may include a director or manager, a coordinator and additional support staff. This team ***should not*** be responsible solely for all Language Access services. Instead, they ***should be building*** individual department capacity for Language Access Implementation.
- Language Access Team Responsibilities can include:
  - Consulting with municipal departments on Language Services,
  - Responding to multilingual access needs,
  - Developing and providing training to departments about Language Access. Such as, obtaining services, implementation, etc. This training should also include Plain Language.
  - Promote Language Access across departments through municipal events, networking, meetings, etc.

To learn more about **Language Access & Staffing**, [click here](#).

## Offer a Community Interpreter Training Program:



### Case Study

The City of Quincy currently runs a [Community Interpreter program](#). The City runs this program in partnership with Quincy Asian Resources Incorporated (QARI). Its mission is: “fostering and improving the social, cultural, economic and civic lives of immigrants and their families in order to benefit their communities.” The program residents, if accepted, receive 40 hours of training.

#### *This training includes:*

- information about interpreting,
- information about the City of Quincy,
- Information about the operations of local government and English language skills development.

#### *Qualification requirements for the program:*

- You must be a Quincy resident,
- You must pass a language test to qualify.

Once residents have completed training, they qualify as paid interpreters for the City of Quincy. This means they can be hired to offer interpretation for public meetings or events.

#### *Why consider this program?*

- It allows you to build a dedicated base of interpreters within your community. These interpreters will have interpretation skills and knowledge of local government. Specifically, they will have knowledge of your community’s government to draw from.
- It builds not only trust with LOTE residents, but opportunity for employment and civic participation. This also allows for long-term relationship building with residents.
- They can help inform outreach strategies based on their knowledge of community priorities and needs.
- No need to contract externally with third-party interpreters

# Language Access & Procurement



# Language Access & Procurement

## Who is this resource best suited for?

- Local, regional or state government entities in Massachusetts(MA) and nation-wide.
- Please keep in mind specifications may vary by state.  
The resources listed here are Massachusetts-specific unless otherwise noted
- Language Access Service Providers

## What is procurement?

Procurement is the process by which government entities acquire goods & services. Government procurement processes include standards to make the procurement fair, open and transparent. These standards prevent favoring any one vendor over another.

***Please note: As a best practice, when conducting a procurement, consult with your finance and legal teams. Each municipality and government entity may differ in their operation. The information provided here should serve as a reference, rather than hard set rules or legal advice.***

Language Access procurement falls under a larger practice of equitable procurement. To learn more about how to do equitable procurement in your community, take a look at the [Government Alliance for Racial Equity Guide on Procurement Best Practices here](#).

As noted above, Disability Access is fundamental to Language Justice. [Please click here to learn more about Disability Access](#). This includes procuring American Sign Language Interpretation and/or Closed Captioning Services.

## In this guide we will speak to four different types of procurement:

1. Translation Services
  - PRF75 Contract
2. Interpretation Services
  - PRF75 Contract
3. In-Language Facilitation Services
4. Cultural Competency Review Services

Before we get to translation and interpretation procurement, let's talk budget! This will not work if you don't have money set aside to offer language services. When you are scoping this work, ensure that you have flexible budget for the services themselves and the staff time it takes to coordinate them. Please see [Investment in Sustainable Language Access](#) section for further support with budget(ing).



# Getting Started with Procurement

Under MA state procurement law, there are different regulations/steps you have to take in the procurement process depending on the amount of your contract.

## Step 1: Determine Contract Amount

Your request is likely under \$10,000:

- As a government entity, you can contract with any vendor, as long as you conduct market research to determine that the service and the value are reasonable, known as sound business practices, and the value of the contract is under \$10,000,
- This can be a great way to partner with local groups and community-based organizations who may not be on the State Vendor List. Oftentimes their understanding of the local community and culture can help provide culturally relevant language services.

***Please note: You can have multiple contracts under \$10,000 with the same vendor, but for different projects. You can't hire a vendor for the same service when the value exceeds \$10,000, as that would be bid splitting, in violation of state procurement law.***

Your request will take you over the \$10,000 limit with the vendor:

- The State of Massachusetts offers a list of **vetted vendors**, with whom there is a no cost limit.
- If you would like to work with a vendor who is not on the state contract, you will have to conduct an RFP (only if your municipality has a Chief Procurement Officer) or an RFQ (which requires that you select the lowest priced vendor) to procure a vendor. However, you will need to consult with your legal team about the correct way to undergo that process.

***Please note that not all vendors are on the state list for both Translation and Interpretation. They may be on the state list for translation and not for interpretation. However, they may still offer interpretation services. If you are contracting with someone who is not on the state list for interpretation services, then you will need to follow the procurement guidelines under the \$10,000 limit. Or if it is over \$10,000, you may conduct an RFP or RFQ.***

**Note:** it is helpful to build into your budget a few additional hours to do a cultural check of translations. This allows you to ensure that the translation is not only accurate, but is appropriate for the community you are trying to reach. We cover how to request cultural check services here.

# Procuring Translation

You are looking to convert a written document from one language to another.

## Step 2: Reach Out to Potential Vendors

Submit an email request for quotes, this email should include:

- The draft document you are requesting translation for (If the document is not yet finalized, you can note it is a draft and estimated word count to get the process started – just get a quote with the final word count);
  - Some vendors may have minimum word count requirements. If this is the case, it can be helpful to bundle documents that you need translation for in one request
- Languages that you are looking for translation in;
- Deadline for translations;
  - ***We recommend making this request with at least a week of buffer time, when possible.***
- Any additional context that could be helpful for the translator.

[For a template quote request email, click here.](#)

***Please Note: In order to abide by public procurement laws, you must reach out to at least two vendors with a Request for Quote.***

## Step 3: Select Your Vendor:

Once your vendors have responded, you must award the contract to the responsive and responsible bidder who offers the lowest price

Criteria we consider:

- Is the vendor able to translate into all the languages we requested and meet the deadline?
- Did the vendor clarify dialects for the languages in which this would be applicable?
- Does the quote fit into the budget we've scoped for?

You will need to email your vendor to confirm that you would like to move forward with them.

Please also email the other vendors you've contacted to let them know that you will not be working with them at this time.

## Step 4: Set up Your Contract:

Once you've selected and confirm your vendor, you can use your municipal agreement contracts to set up your services.



- **Case Study:** For more information on municipal procurement – check out the City of Boston's Content Translation Protocol.
- If you are a regional entity, you can use the PRF75 contract to set up your services.

–Click here for a template of the PRF75 Contract.

## Step 5: Complete Your Translation Request:

- Once the contract is complete, your vendor will email you the finalized translations by the deadline.
- You may need to do some formatting after receiving the translations. Some translators use their own translation formats. You may need to place the language in the final document you are sharing. Make sure that you double check you transferred the language correctly.
- Once vendors have completed the translation, they can invoice you for payment. Check with your finance and legal departments for details on that process.

# Interpretation Services

You are looking for the words shared verbally in one language to be shared verbally in a different language. There are two types of interpretation:

## Step 1: Identify type of interpretation services needed:

**Simultaneous Interpretation** – The interpreter is speaking in another language at the same time as the speaker.

This form of interpretation is often used at events, **keep in mind**:

- You will likely need multiple interpreters for each language to maintain the pace of simultaneous interpretation.
- It is helpful to provide as much information and content ahead of time to the interpreters as possible. This way they can prepare for the specific topics and/or jargon they may be required to use in their interpretation.

**Consecutive Interpretation** – The speaker shares a few sentences, then pauses. The interpreter then shares those same sentences in the interpreted language.

- This form of interpretation is slower, as it doubles the length of any speaking portion. However it can allow for a slower and more conversational experience.
- Consecutive interpretation is helpful in events that involve discussion or two-way communication. Since the content won't be prepared ahead of time, the interpreter will have time to listen before interpreting.

***Wondering how to know how much this will cost? Here is a list of estimates based on recent requests made by MAPC. Please note that these numbers may change depending on the vendor, the specifics of the request and turnaround time. To learn more about budgeting for Language Access, [click here](#). Keep in mind that you will likely need to budget for multiple interpreters for your event. Interpreters rarely provide continuous interpretation for more than one hour. They typically work in pairs and alternate throughout the event. This means that if you hire 2 interpreters for a 3 hour event, you are paying them both for those 3 hours.***

## Step 2: Reach Out to Potential Vendors:

Submit an email request for quotes, this email should include:

- Description of event and content that you are requesting interpretation for;
- Date, time and duration of the event, including a 30 minute prep session, and early arrival time for the event.
- The draft document you are requesting interpretation for;
- Languages that you are looking for interpretation in;
- Deadline for interpretations;
- Whether you are looking for simultaneous or consecutive interpretation;
- Any additional context that could be helpful for the interpreter.

**Please Note:** Vendors often have a minimum hour requirement.

**[For a template quote request email, click here.](#)**

***When using the statewide contract, you must share a request for quotes with at least 2 vendors.***

***If you perform an RFQ, you must seek at least 3 bids from qualified bidders.***

## **Step 4: Select Your Vendor:**

Once your vendors have responded, you can select a vendor based on what works best for your services

Criteria we consider:

- Is the vendor able to offer interpretation in all the languages you requested?
- Did the vendor clarify dialects for the languages in which this would be applicable?
- Does the quote fit into the budget you've scoped for?
- Are they equipped to provide interpretation for the event format you have planned? For example, familiarity with the Zoom interpretation feature.
- Have they provided similar services to clients in the past?

You will need to email your vendor to confirm that you would like to move forward with them.

Please also email the other vendors you've contacted to let them know that you will not be working with them at this time.

## **Step 5: Set up Your Contract:**

Once you've selected and confirm your vendor, you can use the PRF75 contract to set up your services. If you are working with a vendor who is not on the state contract, you can still model your contract off the PRF75 or off of your municipality's contracts for services.

- [Click here for a template of the PRF75 Contract.](#)

## **Step 6: Prepare Your Interpreter(s) for Your Event**

***This is a crucial step. Your interpretation will be more accurate and useful to participants the more prepared your interpreter is.***

Set up a time to meet with the interpreter(s) to talk through the run of show, content, and any questions you may have.

- ***Yes, you do have to budget and pay for this time.*** Usually this meeting takes 30 minutes to an hour depending on the length of the event you are preparing for and the number of interpreters involved.
- You may be working with a community partner on an event you are hiring interpreters for. If that partner has staff who are native speaker of the language you are seeking interpretation for, it can be helpful for them to screen the interpreters ahead of time. They could meet with the interpreter and ask them cultural context questions or go through the material with them. This can be a helpful way to ensure that your participants will be able to fully understand and ***comfortably receive*** the content. ***You should compensate your partner for this additional service.***
- Consider providing a list or glossary of any common terms that you will be using during the event.

Send your interpreter(s) any prepared material to familiarize themselves with before the event.

Send final event details, including:

- Location logistics
- Digital log-in logistics (if applicable)
- Final run of show for the day.
- It is helpful to add specific instructions or notes for the interpreters, if you can.

Seeking procurement for American Sign Language? Please use the same steps noted in the 'Interpretation Procurement Section'. However, the State Vendor List and template request for *American Sign Language Vendors* can be [found here](#).

Please note that if you are procuring any services for an event, you must make those requests in advance. *For more information on Language Access & Events*, [click here](#).



### Interpretation Tip

Remote platforms, like Zoom, are often equipped to provide interpretation. This can be a great tool for hybrid or remote events, but also for in-person events that make use of screens. When hosting an event, ***consider using your remote platform for interpretation***.

#### ***Why?***

- You can provide the same interpretation to remote and in-person participants
- In-person participants can use their personal devices to access the interpretation, rather than needing to rely on a headset
  - However you need to notify participants ahead of time to bring their own headphones, or have headphones that people can borrow onsite
- It allows flexibility for your interpreters, as they may be able to join remotely, rather than traveling to your event.
  - However, you need to ensure that the audio is very clear
- It allows for interpretation to happen in multiple languages at once

For more information on how to set up hybrid/remote interpretation for an in-person setting, [click here](#).





## What about On Demand Interpretation or Translation Services?

People should have access to language services as soon as they walk through the front door. Municipalities can address this need by having interpretation available. This is much easier to do through an ongoing contract with a company or service, which can be done easily by an RFQ. This way, staff can request interpretation or translation as needed.

Within on demand services, there are several options available to consider:

- To offer ready-to-go language services, some entities have started to hire bilingual staff. This can be a great way to ensure that people feel welcome, heard and understood. There is nothing quite like being greeted by someone who speaks your home language, right? If taken on, this workload should be a part of staff job descriptions and expectations. Employers must pay bilingual staff for that additional work. This does not mean that every bilingual staff member needs to be a Language Service Provider. No staff should be expected to play that role, unless it is part of their workload. Additionally, being language proficient is not the same as the ability to provide interpretation skillfully. Professional interpretation requires training and certifications.
- To learn more about Language Access & Staffing, please [click here](#).
- Many companies offer 24 hour remote service. Staff can request interpretation when they have an identified need for it. The interpretation is offered over the phone. Certain companies also provide a video feature, however this may often be at an additional cost. Several communities in the Greater Boston Area use these programs.
- App subscriptions or portable translation and interpretation devices are an alternative solution. The app or tool option gives the user more autonomy. For example, an individual can request interpretation themselves. However, folks may not have the app downloaded already or may not have access to a device. It is important to educate people on the tools available to them. And you may need to seek alternatives, if those tools don't work.
- [Wakefield Example]
- Municipalities have hired in-house interpreters and translators. This can be a helpful strategy in communities with a dominant linguistic group.
- For more information on **the cost for staff time**, [click here](#).
- **Accessibility note:** Many vendors with remote video interpretation offer American Sign Language within their list of available languages. However, you will need to confirm this with a vendor directly.

***To learn more about whether you can contract On Demand Services within your municipality, speak with your legal counsel and your procurement/purchasing department.***

# In-Language Facilitation Services

You are looking to host an event or meeting in a language other than English. You need to contract with an external facilitator who speaks that language.

## Step 1: Identify a Facilitator

For this type of collaboration, we recommend working with an individual or organization from start to finish. This will help coordinate your meeting design, content development, and note-taking. Often this is possible when you have an ongoing relationship built on trust and reciprocity with a potential partner.

Please discuss parameters and expectations with your facilitator. Are they also taking on coordinating a location? Is the facilitation happening as part of programming they already have scheduled? Is this event in-person or remote? Are they expected to do outreach and coordination with participants before and after?

Consider reviewing the statewide professional services contract to find facilitators who are able to provide services the language/s that you require.

## Step 2: Set up a contract with the facilitator.

This contract should include:

Cost for preparation time. As little as three hours and up to 15 hours, depending on the nature of the event. Consult your facilitator on preparation estimates.

Cost for day-of facilitation and notetaking. Each of these roles should be filled separately by people. Therefore you are covering staff time for at least two people for the duration of the event.

Cost for any outreach and coordination the facilitator may do ahead of time.

For a template contract, please [click here](#).

## Step 3: Prepare with the facilitator:

We encourage you to think of your in-language facilitator as a thought partner and collaborator. If you plan to do this, please include those individuals in the process at the start (scoping), or as early as possible. Working with a partner who has local community context can foster a meaningful and effective event. As speakers of the target language, they are bringing not only their language expertise, but often irreplaceable cultural knowledge. Please work with and pay your facilitators accordingly!

We recommend at minimum three preparatory meetings:

- One content & meeting design brainstorm session
- One material review & run through session
- One debrief session.

If you have budget and capacity, and if the event is more complex, it may be helpful to have more preparatory sessions with your facilitator. It is also helpful to do ongoing coordination on outreach and content.

**Day before:** send final event details, including:

- Location logistics
- Digital log-in logistics (if applicable)
- Final run of show for the day.

## 4. Pay Your Facilitator

After the event, the facilitator can invoice you based on the contract agreement. Ideally this happens immediately after or within the first few days following the event.

Please note that some vendors may request to invoice ahead of the event. Municipalities may not prepay for services. However, if there are preparatory meetings in advance of the event, those meetings are invoiceable if they are built into the contract as a deliverable.

### ***What do I do with the notes afterwards?***

Option 1: You can incorporate time for translation back to English into the contract with the facilitator.

Option 2: You can contract separately with a translator to translate the notes into English.

# Cultural Competency Review Services

You've procured your translations, and want to make sure they will work for the community you are trying to reach.

Cultural context matters. And language shifts depending on cultural context. We recommend taking your language services beyond translation and interpretation. You can do this by procuring services for a Cultural Competency Review.

## Step 1: Identify a Cultural Competency Reviewer

Ideally this is somebody who is local or connected to the community you are trying to reach.

- If you decide to look within your organization, ensure that the staff person selected is compensated for this service. This also includes being sensitive/aware of their capacity. Inquire with them about capacity and timeline for turnaround time.

It is helpful if you have an ongoing collaboration with this individual or organization. There are models for this through in-language engagement groups, which have been successful in Cambridge, Revere, Lynn, and other municipalities in the State.

## Step 2: Set up a contract with the Cultural Competency Reviewer.

This contract should include:

Cost for preparation time. As little as one hour and up to five hours, depending on the nature of the event. Consult your facilitator on preparation estimates.

Cost for review.

For a template contract, please [click here](#).

## Step 3: Prepare with the Cultural Competency Reviewer.

Share the context they may need to review the document.

## Step 4: Pay Your Reviewer.

After review submission, reviewers can invoice you based on the contract agreement.

# Language Access & ADA Accessibility



# Understanding Language Access within the Framework of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Language Access and disability access are fundamentally intertwined. When we talk about Language Access at MAPC, we include disability access within our definition. To provide Language Access services means communicating with people in a way that they can understand and participate, regardless of the language they speak or the access needs that they may have. To better understand what you should be considering regarding Disability Access within your Language Services, please see below.

***Disability can be both visible and invisible and is unique to each individual person. While the resources noted in this guide can help provide support to people living with disabilities, it is important to check in with each person about their specific preferences and access needs. Furthermore, this is not a complete list.***

To learn more about Disability Rights, [click here](#).

## This section will explore:

1. Under the American with Disabilities Act, what are people's rights for Communication Access?
2. Tools for Disability & Language Access ;
3. Event Planning with ADA In Mind;
4. State Resources to Support your Accessibility Work;

## Under the ADA, what are people's rights for communication access?

"The [Americans with Disabilities Act] guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs."<sup>1</sup>

Municipalities are expected to budget for ADA accessibility, which should include communications access. Disability is an equity issue. When dollars are equitably distributed to include people with disabilities, it allows for resources, programming, and support. This in turn allows people to participate in public process – across their access needs.

It is also necessary for municipalities to have an Accessibility Plan, not only for your buildings and municipal plans, but for your communication, events, programming, and service provision.

Please note that each community is required to complete a **Self-Evaluation**, as well as a [Transition Plan](#) following the Self-Evaluation. The self-evaluation requires that each municipality take a look at their facilities, services, and programs and evaluate their compliance with ADA. The Transition Plan then lays out a strategic system for how to tackle any deficits to make the municipality more accessible.

To learn more about designing an Accessibility Plan, [click here](#).

When considering language access, we want to know whether people can understand and participate or get the services they need.

## Do your communications and public processes include disability access?

- Is your communication written in plain language?
- Do your images include image descriptions?
- Can a screen reader work with the document format?
  - Before posting documents online, governments can prioritize PDF remediation to ensure documents are accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.
- Do you have American Sign Language and or captioning available at your events?
- Are you offering material in multiple formats to account for access needs and learning styles?,  
For example:
  - Presenting written text in an audio or video format;
  - Sharing a transcript along with a video;
  - Offering visuals along with text.

## Tools that you can use for Language & Disability Access



### Plan Language

- The current national literacy levels are at the low end of middle school reading age. Furthermore, residents should not have to be content experts to participate in public process.
- Plain Language is any communication (written, spoken, or visual) that can be understood upon the first time encountering it and without further explanation. Plain Language typically involves shorter, clear sentences and active tense. Plain language guidelines may vary depending on the context and audience. However, for public-facing communication, the recommended goal is for an 8th grade reading level. This guide, on average, aims to be read between an 8th and 9th grade reading level.
- Plain language includes:
  - the use of common, every-day words (rather than jargon),
  - short sentences,
  - definitions for words or phrases that do not match an 8th grade reading level.
  - writing out acronyms.
- We have found that plain language has pushed us to be more direct and clear with the points we are trying to make. Plain Language pushes us to define exactly what we want to say directly. It pushes us to share definitions, so that others may understand exactly what we mean when we use certain words (especially jargon). Plain Language creates a basis for shared understanding and connection. By using Plain Language and centering our target audience, we make it easier for our community members to decide and follow a course of action.
- Plain Language is likely the most cost-effective tool you have. It is a change you can make immediately, without any contracts or additional services. And it is a change that supports everyone in understanding each other.
  - Plain language supports clear translation into other languages.
  - Plain language makes the work we do accessible.
  - Plain language assists us in connecting with one another.



- In order to test out your use of Plain Language, you can use the [Hemingway App](#). This is a website that will help identify:
  - Sentences that are difficult to read,
  - Estimated grade level you are writing at,
  - Words or phrases with simpler alternatives
- Learn More:
  - Explore: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov>

### **American Sign Language:**

- American Sign Language is a visual language that relies on making signs with hands. According to the National Association of the Deaf: “The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information.” American Sign Language is largely spoken by the D/deaf community. For more facts about **American Sign Language**, [click here](#).
- 1.4 million people in Massachusetts Commonwealth have hearing loss. Many of those people use American Sign Language to communicate. American Sign Language interpretation can be one of the best ways to ensure that D/deaf people can participate in your event or access services they need.
- In the [Procurement Section](#) we discussed simultaneous and consecutive interpretation. Please use the same steps noted in the ‘Interpretation Procurement Section’ to procure American Sign Language services. However, the State Vendor List and template request for American Sign Language Vendors can be [found here](#).
  - We also explored availability of On Demand Interpretation. Many vendors will offer remote video interpretation as part of their services. In those cases, they may also offer American Sign Language within their list of available languages. However, you will need to confirm this with a vendor directly.

### **Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) Services:**

- American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation is a fundamental component of Language Access. However, not all people with hearing needs speak American Sign Language. For this reason, provision of Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) Services is another crucial tool for those who are D/deaf or hard of hearing. Simply put, this service provides subtitles for live discussions. This is a particularly useful tool when engaging virtually (Ex. Zoom; Municipal public forum).
- **The Statewide Interpreter & Cart Referral Service** can set you up with a CART provider. To submit a request, please [click here](#).
  - Please keep in mind that availability is limited. You must submit your request multiple weeks in advance.
- To keep in mind about CART services:
  - The CART Transcript is not an official recording of an event or conversation. For this reason, it should not be saved. ***If a CART Transcript is saved and/or shared, it becomes public record.***
  - CART Services usually work through a stream text link. It is important to use a new unique link for each event, rather than recycling the same link.
  - The Statewide referral service does not currently offer CART in languages other than English.

## ***Assisted Listening Devices: Simultaneous Interpreter Equipment:***

- Plan to supply assisted listening device(s) at your events. These devices can be very useful for those hard of hearing, particularly when in a relatively large space.
  - Ensure that the device(s) and components are fully charged and functional ahead of the event.
  - Make sure to clean devices after each individual use.



Assisted listening devices can often double as interpretation devices. This can be a great way to invest in technology that serves multiple purposes.

### **Keep in Mind**

- These type of services are often thought of and requested too late. Allow time for requests to be made (1-2 months in advance). And ensure to follow up about the request after it has been made. When event planning has begun - that's when the initiation for requesting sign language interpreter(s) should be made. Bringing these type of staff on early allows for tips and tricks to be appropriately incorporated into the event.
- Establish a cut off day to publish notices for accommodations. Make sure to offer opportunity for folks to let you know what needs they have. This gives a reasonable chance of making services happen ahead of time.
  - Note of accessibility accommodations is required for all public notices.
  - Make sure to list the ADA Coordinator if one is available.
- Technology is rarely a barrier these days. Platforms we use are underestimated because they update so often. When using technology:
  - Test things out ahead of time,
  - If hosting an event remotely, sign on early to assign duties and make sure the platform works smoothly,
- If one tool doesn't work, make sure you are thinking about backup options to meet expectations of reasonable accessibility at an event. This may mean getting creative!
- Technology is great, but it does not replace people. The gold standard for accessibility services is people-provided (rather than automated via technology). This means it will always be preferable to have a live captioner, a live interpreter, etc

## Event Planning with ADA in mind

- ***ADA is important to consider for any work, but especially comes to play for events and gatherings. First and foremost, request services ahead of time.***
- When planning your event or engagement, here are some questions to consider:
  - What are the current needs?
    - Think about the audience for meetings – what are their needs?
    - Do participants have an opportunity to let you know about their accessibility needs? (I.e. when they register)
  - What does the current budget allow for in terms of services?
  - Who is able to provide this service?
    - State agencies
    - Local agencies
  - Can you provide language **and** accessibility services?
  - How long is your event? Are you budgeting for multiple language or accessibility service providers?
  - What are your strategies to inform the public that these service(s) will be provided?
- When working with interpreters or CART service providers, provide as much content information ahead of time as possible. This will help staff familiarize themselves with the language that will be used, including any unusual vocabulary or acronyms, before working the event.

To learn more about **Language Access & Event Planning**, [click here](#)

## ADA State Resources

It can be daunting to set up accessibility and communications infrastructure. However, you are not alone!

- The Massachusetts Office of Disability offers grants to support communities in remaining up to date with their accessibility infrastructure:
  - Under the [capital improvement grant](#), there are two types of grants available:
    - [Planning Grant](#)
    - [Project Grant](#)
  - You can read about both here.
  - Consider purchasing Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment and/or CART Services equipment.
- [The Massachusetts Office of Disability](#)
  - A community member can call about anything disability related. This includes: discrimination in public services; call staff; technology assistance; rights; steps to take towards issue.
  - Municipal staff can call 617-727-7440 to get connected to resources on access and rights issues, including daily living activities and independent living services.
    - Please note that the State also has the [Massachusetts Commission for the Blind](#). Please reach out to this commission for any questions related to support services for people who are blind.
- [Deaf Incorporated](#)
  - Referral service offered:
    - Small number of staff interpreters: 200-300 ASL providers; 20 CART providers
    - No charge for referral. Billing is between provider and municipal partner requester.
    - Substance use disorder program: vision, hearing, or have had substance use challenges
- Templates for Requests & Accessibility Communications
  - [Accessibility & Language Accommodations Request Notice](#)
  - [Template request for ASL Interpretation](#)

# Defining Emergent Needs for Language Access Services

The Language Access Coalition of Massachusetts states that all members of our community “have the right to access justice and public services regardless of their ability to read, write, speak or understand English.” The need for Language Access Services is rapidly increasing, and we understand the limitations of communities due to cost.

This is why it is important to define the emergent needs for language access in your community. There are multiple ways to identify these needs, with the dominant sources being Census or ACS data that can aid in uncovering the demographics and languages spoken. Unfortunately, these data sets don’t always show the entire picture of the prevailing needs, and you must get creative and resourceful in uncovering other ways to intentionally gather information. There are times when you will have to look beyond this data and look at the community around you.

We recommend developing an understanding of emergent needs and determining what services you provide based on those needs. This way you can ensure that your services are most relevant and effective for those who are living, working or participating in your community. When defining needs for your community, it is important to keep in mind that:

- Our communities may always be changing. ***It is important to re-examine thresholds regularly to adapt for that change.***
- That people may have individual needs when they show up that had not previously been accounted for. It is imperative that we develop processes that can adapt to needs of individuals.

## Types of Data to use

### **Municipal Census Data**

- This can show the demographics at a local level
- Ask your departmental partners about what local population data they have and who they regularly serve. You can create a survey for each department to collect this data in a more thoughtful way.
- Some departments like the City Clerk and Community Development and Planning might have their own data sets as well that they can share.

### **School district data**

- While speakers of languages other than English may not be interacting with town hall, they may have children enrolled in schools. Partnering with local schools can give a broader picture of who lives in the community. Through this collaboration you can identify services needs, gaps, and opportunities for engagement.
- Public schools also must collect this data for the Department of Education (DESE) and will be able to share those data sets with you.

### **Service provider data**

- If you have local service providers in your community, especially those who may be providing services in multiple languages, you may be able request language data from those providers.
  - Always explain the purpose of why you are reaching out and why the data will benefit that community. Additionally, you can ask for the information to be de-identified to protect the anonymity of their clients.

## Commercial data

- Use search engines to explore information about local trends and information. The local newspaper also might have information.
- Restaurants and cafes might also have insights on who they are serving most.
- Businesses tailored to sub populations. Furthermore, these are businesses that support/meet the need of different ethnic groups and/or those with varying abilities. These businesses are touch points (connections) and have the necessary insights to advance language access on a community level.



## Case Study Dataset Examples: City of Boston

- Boston, as a City with multiple diverse neighborhoods, each with their own linguistic needs, has separated its data collection and thresholds out by those neighborhoods. This allows for Boston's Language Access Services to be adaptive and relevant to the needs of the different geographic areas of the city, as well as cost effective in their service provision.

## Who to bring to the table for conversation:

When defining thresholds, it is important to have consensus and consistency across your municipality. Often, what you determine as the emergent needs will dictate the programming and services that you provide. Because of this, collaboration helps in understanding community needs and ensuring that all key stakeholders are on the same page about those needs. Consider having conversations, presentations and/or decisions that involve the input of:

### Municipal Leadership

- To support you in your mission to create sustainable language access investment and build political will for that investment.

### Finance Staff

- To support you in your mission to create sustainable language access investment.

### Local Advocates

- Local advocates and/or those most impacted by Language Access. People with lived experience should always weigh in on Language Access policy.

### Diversity Equity & Inclusion Staff

- To support you in your mission to create equitable supports that meet fellow community members where they are at.

## What happens if there is a language request or need that does not meet the threshold you've defined?

- Let's say a community member reaches out with a request, but that request does not reflected in the definitions of emerging needs that you and your team have set.
- Explore immediate options that support the current need. There is a likely chance this is not the only individual with a language need. Look to employ a long-term, sustainable solution. Ideally, whatever you do can meet the needs of more than one community member.
- Document what you did, what worked, and what didn't. This will help in future occurrences.
- Look for additional opportunities for support. If this happens again, how can you activate a solution with minimal effort?
- Consider on demand interpretation options. This can be especially helpful for forward facing roles.  
*To learn more about on demand interpretation, [click here](#).*

# Language Access & Immigration

It is impossible to discuss Language Access without addressing the current reality of immigration in Massachusetts. The linguistic needs of your community may change, depending on the people who arrive to it. Your language access services should adapt to those changes. This may seem like a higher cost investment. In the long run, providing adequate and consistent language services help people:

- Feel more welcomed,
- Be more engaged,
- Be advocates for themselves,
- Rely less on further services.

This is especially why determining emerging language needs must be a recurring practice. Thresholds and demographics change. Our services should be flexible to shift with them to best meet the needs of our constituents.

We want you to know you are not alone in navigating the welcoming of newly arriving individuals and families to your communities. To learn more about the work MAPC has been doing with municipalities on new arrivals, [please click here](#).

## Additional Immigration Resources:

<https://miracoalition.org/>

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-for-refugees-and-immigrants>

<https://www.mass.gov/help-families-in-crisis>

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/emergency-assistance-ea-family-shelter-resources-and-data>

In addition to looking at a state level, explore opportunities to connect adjacent/neighborhood communities that have immigrant focused services & programs.

# Language Access & Events

Language Justice includes language access services that are consistently available. From the start to finish of an interaction (in person or virtual), individuals deserve access to language services. And with that, we recognize that events are often the first place that Language Access gets incorporated into municipal work. Furthermore, events tend to have their own budgets. This may allow you to test out Language Access before applying it to your municipality or organization-wide. If language access is done right at events, they can be long-term trust-building opportunities for non-English language constituents, who may engage in other ways down the line.

## Language Justice Considerations for your Events:

### 1. What is the purpose of your event?

What kind of engagement are you looking for? How do you plan to meaningfully include the input from the participants? Will you communicate that intention to them? What will your follow up look like?

- It is important to keep in mind the cultural considerations of Language Access. While the existence of interpretation or in-language facilitation may support someone in understanding the event, that may not be enough to support their full participation. Consider how you can make people feel culturally welcome, in addition to providing language services.

### 2. How are you reaching non-English language speaking communities?

It can be disappointing to translate flyers and materials, and then not have people show up. **How are you making sure people are not only receiving the information, but feel welcome and interested in joining?** Consider:

- Reaching out to partners or conveners in those non-English language communities,
- Attending some of their events before your own, connecting with people at those events,
- Offering ongoing opportunities for trust-building and connection,
- Ensuring your outreach is consistent on all platforms, for example, if you're sharing about an event on social media – are the graphics translated? If not, are there universal images that you can use to help foster understanding? If you use a graphic – is the blurb also translated? **Consistency is key.**

People may not use the Language Services you offer, but this does not mean you should stop providing them immediately. Consistency builds trust. When people feel welcomed and that their participation matters, they will show up more. It just may take time to get there.

- You may be investing funds for language access when people are not yet using the services. If this is the case, and you are getting push back, consider the following:
  - Setting up a deadline to re-evaluate your provision of language services at events. We recommend giving this at least a year to really build momentum.
  - Do a **cost analysis** of the investment required to engage those communities separately or provide support/services separately.
  - It is important to note that you should be investing these funds having already identified a need for services. **You can learn more about this here.** This identified data can help back you up in continuing to provide services.



**Case Study** – The Town of Danvers conducted a survey to determine Language Access need, which then informed priorities for translation and interpretation for events, **to read the survey, [click here](#).**



### ***3. How are you following up after your event to ensure longer-term participation and trust-building? This could include:***

- Sharing results of event and impact of the feedback on outcome/final product;
- Reaching out with a survey/evaluation of the event;
- Doing a follow up in-language meeting or office hours a few weeks later;
- Sharing about future event opportunities at end of event and then following up on those opportunities closer to (through multi-lingual outreach materials).
- If you are working on a longer term project with multiple events for it, have you developed a community engagement plan?

– The MAPC Community Engagement team is here to support you in thinking through your project engagement needs. ***To learn more about MAPC’s Community Engagement Work.*** [click here](#)

– ***For MAPC’s Community Engagement Guide,*** [click here](#).

### ***Having translation and interpretation at events is great. However, Language Justice invites us to work towards hosting multilingual events.***

- A multilingual event is an event in which full participation is possible in multiple languages and resources are distributed equitably for people to participate.

This may include:

- Materials written in plain language;
- Facilitation offered in multiple languages;
- Interpretation in multiple languages. This includes interpretation from English to the other languages and vice versa;
- Materials provided in multiple languages;
- Closed captions & American sign language interpretation;
- Opportunities for speakers of each language to respond/participate.

### ***Building up to this vision, Language Access components to include:***

Interpretation – procure interpretation for the duration for your event

- ***To learn more about how to procure interpretation,*** [click here](#).

Translation – provide translation of all written materials. This can be both in leading up to the event (outreach) and on the day of (content).

- You should also be accounting for translating back any feedback/input that is offered in a language other than English.
- Your materials should also be accessible, meaning they can be read by a screen reader.
- ***To learn more about how to procure translations,*** [click here](#).

Develop your content & presentation in plain language.

- Offer definitions or explanations for material that may be unfamiliar to the audience.
- ***To learn more about plain language,*** [click here](#).

Offer closed captions and/or American Sign Language Interpretation

- ***To learn more about ADA Accessibility & Language Access,*** [click here](#).

## The key to success: Plan Ahead

To provide adequate language access, it is crucial that you plan ahead of time, this means:

- Thinking about language access as you budget for your event. Allocating dollars to Language Access in the event budget.
- Thinking about language access in the design of your event. What are ways you can make the content and facilitation more flexible for multilingual access?
  - For each activity to be linguistically accessible, how many staff do you need?
- Make requests for interpreters and/or translations at least a month in advance
  - This means you may need to finalize content on an earlier timeline
- Sometime translators can work on a shorter timeline, depending on the content. It is crucial that you reach out to them in advance to ensure this is a possibility

Inform the public of the language access supports that will be provided.

- This creates opportunities for people to request services ahead of the event.
- Flyers Although you may inform the community of language access services provided, this does not mean that those who requested the services will attend. **Consistency is key; continue to inform the community of these services.**

## Resources:

For a full event timeline, [click here](#).

# Setting Up for Language Access



# Designing a Language Access Plan

Language Access Plans are a great tool for municipalities or organizations to develop Language Access services.

## What does a Language Access Plan do?

A Plan lays out measurable steps leadership and staff take to provide services to speakers of Languages Other than English (LOTE) or People with Disabilities. This may include:

- Description of rights that speakers of LOTE and People with Disabilities have to language and communication services;
- Description of types of language and communication services;
- Standards for providing language and communication services;
- Definitions of emergent needs for providing Language Access services;
- Guidance on tracking and evaluating Language Services provided across departments;
- Identification of vital documents (any documents having legal ramifications) and/or events in which Language Access is required;
- Guidance on how to determine when language and/or communication services are needed:
  - If a person has self-identified a need for language or communications access, the municipality should address that need.
  - One way to support people in self-identifying their language needs: municipalities can have ‘I Speak’ cards available in different language for people to pick from and show the front desk. This way, the need for language services is clear.
- Guidance on protocols for requesting services;
- Outlines for staff trainings. Often the burden of Language Access will fall to a singular staff person or department. Having dedicated Language Access staff can be instrumental for providing Language Services. However, ideally, all staff are able to access and provide services as needed. These trainings can help build that staff capacity.
- Guidance for receiving or filing Language Access Complaints.

Language Access Plans can be a great way to set agreement across your municipality or organization towards providing consistent Language Services in your community. It can also be an advocacy tool for budget, staffing and provision of Language Access services. Lastly, it can serve as a mechanism for accountability and evaluation.

It is important to note that Language Access plans don't always include budget. However, the budget and the plan should mirror each other. To learn more about budgeting for Language Access, [please click here](#).



### Example Plans:

[Quincy Language Access Plan \(2020\)](#)

[City of Boston Plain Language Template Plan](#)

[Limited English Proficiency \(lep.gov\)](#)

**Are you an MA municipality with a Language Access Plan?**  
**Want to include it here?** Reach out to Sasha Parodi (sparodi@mapc.org).

To implement their Language Access plans, municipalities have been establishing Language Access staffing roles. *To learn more about Language Access and Staffing*, [click here](#).

## What if I don't have capacity to establish a Language Access plan?

Establishing and improving language access should be a continuous process that happens over time. We recognize that folks may not have the capacity to do everything at once, that's okay! Start with one step, see where that takes you. Build from there!

- Take a look at the sample Language Access Plans above. What is one part of the plan that you can work towards defining in the next year? What do you need or what needs to be in place to achieve that?
- Events can be a great opportunity to test out Language Services. If you're planning an event in the near future – what language and communications access can you provide? Track the process, cost and successes/challenges of this event. You could track languages served at several events throughout the year. Then use that data to determine priority next steps. To learn more about Language Access & Events, [click here](#).
- Start with conversations. Check in with colleagues in other departments: How often are they receiving language service requests? What questions or challenges do they have in providing language services? Identify next steps based on people's answers.
- Data can be a great tool to support identifying the language access needs in your community and determining baseline services for those needs. To learn more about understanding emerging Language Access needs, [please click here](#).
  - This data can then inform the services or protocols that you should prioritize establishing, to meet the current need in your community.

## How should we share our Language Access Plans?

Language Access Plans should be posted on municipality websites so they should contain information regarding what their policies are but also how to file a complaint if one does not receive language access as well as protocols on how to request services.

When sharing Language Access plans, they should be written in plain language, at the appropriate reading level. They should also be translated into languages spoken in your municipality.

- If budgets are constrained to share the full Language Access plan, municipalities can make a summary document such as an infographic. This way you can inform constituents of:
  - Main takeaways from the plan;
  - Important information related to constituent rights;
  - Descriptions of services available and how to request them.

# Language Access & Staffing

Procuring one-off language services can be tedious, difficult and costly (in the long run), especially if you are doing so day to day, rather than for a one-time event. For this reason, several municipalities have turned to permanent Language Access staffing as a potential solution to their community’s linguistic needs.

When considering a Language Access Role (or roles) in your municipality, it is important to keep in mind the landscape that the staff will need to navigating. If you are asking an individual to be responsible for implementing a Language Access practice across municipal department, ***that staff person should have a leadership role and be empowered to make the decisions needed to move that work forward.***

We recognize that budgets may often require, at least at an initial step, starting with a more junior position. If you hire for a Language Access Coordinator, please ensure that their manager/director has the necessary capacity to support them in Language Access implementation work and navigating cross-departmental relationships.

Regardless of the role you are hiring for, it is important to consider budgets, structures and systems that will support this team member in implementing Language Access. No individual can do this work alone, they will need structural resources to be effective.

Below we’ve outlined 3 key roles to consider for your Language Access team. While you may not be able to hire all positions at once, we want to reflect how these positions relate to each other. Additionally, it is important to consider what supports each role may need individually in order to be successful. These lists are not comprehensive, but rather are meant to give a general sense of the differences between each role.

Language Access Manager	Language Access Coordinator	In-House Translator & Interpreter
Responsible for inter-departmental relationship building and working with department leaders to build buy-in for language access.	Consults with municipal departments on Language Services procurement and/or responding to multilingual access needs.	Provide interpretation or translation by request from municipal staff.
Manages budget, data and resources for language access implementation.	Develops and provides training and resources to departments about Language Access and how to obtain services, implement it into day to day, etc. This training should also include Plain Language.	Monitor and respond to requests for interpretation and translation that come in from municipal departments.
Oversees and support other Language Access Team Members.	Promote Language Access cross-departmentally through municipal events, networking, meetings, etc.	Staff Constituency Services desk for on-demand interpretation needs of community members.
Advocates for Language Access Priorities on local level through research, data collection, evaluation, and community engagement processes.	Develops information for the public on their accessibility rights and how to access language and communications services.	
Develops projects that expand efficacy and reach of Language Services of municipality.		

## ***A note about In-House Translators/Interpreters:***

It is important that these staff have clarity over which departments they are working with or are accountable to and what they should be prioritizing of the requests that may come their way. Even full-time translators most likely will still not be able to meet all language needs. However, this can help alleviate some procurement back and forth, especially if you are looking to provide consistent translation and interpretation.

If you are looking to hire in-house interpreters or translators, we highly recommend making these full-time positions. This allows staff to more comprehensively and consistently meet the language needs of your community, it also provides more support to staff, as they can access established, employment benefits.

## **Hiring Multi-Lingual Staff:**

It is important to distinguish between staff who are building your Language Access work (typically a Language Access Manager or Coordinator) and multilingual staff who may be providing in-language services, depending on needs that arise.

Historically and continuing present day, municipal staff who have a language capacity other than English are asked to provide interpretation/translations services. When this skillset is not built into staff role descriptions or contracts, staff providing these services are not compensated. Staff providing this service are not only providing language services, but also are creating relationships and building trust between the municipality and community. As a result of making this connection, the staff may be taking on coordination work beyond their job responsibilities.

Hiring multilingual staff can be fundamental to ensuring that people feel welcomed in your municipality and/or organization. When hiring multilingual staff, it is important to be clear about what language services they can provide, and how those services fit into their overall responsibilities. Furthermore, if a staff-member is not a certified interpreter, they should not provide interpretation for individuals. Instead, they should rely on the formalized language services process in your municipality or organization. However, multilingual staff can greet and interact with people in languages other than English.

Multilingual staff should receive access to professional development opportunities, including interpreter certification opportunities, should they be interested in becoming a certified interpreter. If a multilingual staffer is hired to provide interpretation and/or translation services, they should have regular professional development to verify their language skills are strong enough to provide bilingual services.

Additionally, as you hire multilingual staff, it is necessary to consider how the culture of your work environment is shifting to welcome and incorporate their culture. In order for staff to be successful they need to feel welcomed, celebrated and supported in their full identities. This then translates to those who may be receiving services from staff.

## **Resources & Tools:**



### **Examples:**

- City of Boston includes a team of 13 staff dedicated to Language Access. This has allowed them to deepen in their service provision, capacity building across the many departments of the city and in providing tailored services by neighborhood.
- To learn more about how the City of Boston's Language Access Department operates, [click here](#).
- City of Cambridge recently instituted a Language Access Manager, to learn more about the City of Cambridge's Language Access model, [click here](#).
- City of Lynn has recently hired full-time interpreters to meet the primary language needs in the city. [Click here to learn more](#).



# Sustainable Language Access Practices



# Investment in Sustainable Language Access

We approach Language Access through the lens of long-term, sustainable, replicable strategy. As you establish your language access practices, please consider them in the long term. Language Access goes beyond interpretation and translation. Sustainable language access can help move towards Language Justice, but how?

1. **Building buy-in;**
2. **Building capacity;**
3. **Build financial resources;**
4. **Working in Partnership and Coordinating with State resources.**

*But first, let's talk budgets!*

## Budgeting for Language Access:

Language access cannot take place without dollars to support it. Budgeting is fundamental to your success. And budgeting can be your biggest challenge. Here is how you can tackle budgeting and investment in Language Access hands-on:

Identify what Language Access services you are looking to prioritize. This may help you prioritize what to fund. Potential buckets:

- **Resources & trainings** for municipal staff who engage regularly with the public. This could include training on:
  - Using interpretation devices;
  - Requesting services for an event;
  - Acquiring on demand interpretation services;
  - Providing multilingual and accessible signage, etc.
- **Investing in translation** of frequently used materials for your municipality (signage, forms, etc.)
- **Investing in larger event budgets** to include multi-lingual access at events.
- **Funds for full-time positions** focused on Language Access (at minimum one position per municipality)
- **Funds for translation** and interpretation costs for public processes
- **Funds for relationship-building** with LOTE communities through engagement, culturally relevant events, etc.
- **Funds for research & evaluation** on Language Access needs in the municipality.

Ideally, you would budget for each of these items individually, but you may want to prioritize some over others. While that is not perfect, it is movement in the right direction. You can start there and grow!

- Research Language Access budgets of communities with similar demographics to yours.
- Understand and be familiar with procurement process. To learn more about Language Access & Procurement, please [click here](#).
- When budgeting for Language Access services, make sure to budget for staff time on procurement;
- Identify players involved for approval of Language Access decisions:
  - Who needs to approve the inclusion of language services?
  - Who determines your budget?

These are important questions to know, so that you can work swiftly and effectively with the different parties involved.

## ***Building Buy-In, Building Power:***

### **On building up language access services in your community:**

Please ensure that you are acquiring services in the context of community input. We must reiterate the importance of community voice. Understand what the community is saying, make your services responsive to that.

If there is a disconnect between the municipal perspective and the community, build in mechanisms that create feedback opportunities to hear from community members. These feedback opportunities should encompass connecting with community members where they are at. Feedback mechanisms should be built on community demographic needs (Census, ACS and Public School data; Non-English speakers specifically). They should also include a data tracking system, tracking progress and gaps.

If you are not hearing from your community, consider who you are reaching. Are there folks you haven't reached or heard from yet? What are ways that you could reach them to get a better understanding of their perspectives and needs?

You may need to be creative and efficient with often limited budget and resources. Look for opportunities that will support this effort like partnering with local Community Based Organizations (CBO's), local agencies, service providers etc.

- When the partnership has been established, leverage this partnership to better meet community needs.

When thinking about how to get municipal leadership on board, start small and build from there. It is likely that investment in Language Access will happen over many conversations. Here are some key points or strategies that you can turn to:

- Using data to demonstrate need in your community for Language Services.
- Identifying funding opportunities for a Language Access budget line item.
- Documenting Language Access successes and impacts through evaluation to show leadership the importance for expanding that work.
- Build a coalition of voices who are advocating for Language Access – across municipal departments and partners.
- When budget is provided, document how that budget was applied. How effective was that use of funds? What gaps remained? This can help you advocate for more budget over time.
- Test out strategies and evaluate them over time. Demonstrate through those smaller-budget test items the need for longer-term investment.
- Identify entities that may already have language access requirements within your community. Work with them to ensure that Language Access is being done well. Those may be:
  - HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) funded entities;
  - Commissions or boards.

Long term, it may be helpful to establish local Language Access policy or ordinance.

**To learn more about Language Access & Policy, [click here](#).**

These steps may also build up to establishing a Language Access Plan.

**To learn more about Language Access Plans, [click here](#).**

## A Note on Collaboration:

- Municipal partners from neighboring communities can help identify migration patterns. They can also be a thought partner in responding to the changing landscape of Language Needs that emerge with migration patterns.
- Many people may participate in multiple communities, their needs traversing municipal lines. Coordinating with partners beyond your own community can help with consistency of services. This also helps share responsibility and cost of response to people's needs.
- Consider building partnerships in your community with organizations and community members who care about language access and may be able to help. For example, in the Language Access & Procurement section we noted the importance of having cultural checks for any translations that you produce. These checks could be provided by local residents or organizations. However, please ensure that you are adequately compensating them for that work.
- Local partnerships can help identify interpreters in your community or in neighboring communities. The benefit is these folks can offer community context, in addition to their linguistic knowledge. Additionally, it can be helpful to have someone who is familiar to community members as the interpreter. This can help strengthen relationships, build trust and create space for more organic participation.
- Consider partnering or collaborating with local schools and/or higher education institutions. This can be a great way to know what language access work is already happening in your municipality. Tap into opportunities for resource and capacity sharing!

Investment is necessary on the local level. And we recognize the importance of statewide investment and implementation in Language Access. [Click here](#) to check out our policy section. This includes advocacy on the Act Relative to Language Access & Inclusion. This Act would mandate public-serving state agencies to have Language Access Plans and have a dedicated Language Access Staff Person.

## Potential challenges & Framings to consider:

### *Language Access costs a lot of money.*

- It costs more budget and staff time) to deal with the consequences of lack of Language Access than it does to provide Language Services. For example, if someone gets hurt, isn't receiving benefits, or winds up in the court system due to lack of Language Access – public taxpayer dollars are going to that process. It would be less costly to have provided Language Access in the first place.
- Investing in Language Access is investing directly into our own communities. Small businesses that are owned by immigrants can better thrive and circulate dollars back into the community if they have the language services they need. Individuals can play larger leadership roles and/or work and contribute to the local economy, when they have language access.
- Language Access is not a 'nice to have' for people. It is a fundamental need and legal right for being able to navigate the world they are existing in.

### *We offered translation or interpretation, and no one used it! We shouldn't provide it next time.*

- It takes time to build up trust with community members. We suggest giving yourself a timeline – 6 months to a year – of consistent service provision. Then evaluate those services over that extended time.
- It is important that people know those services are available to them! How are you sharing about these resources? Have you reached out to community-based partners? Are you meeting people where they are at?

### *I don't have the budget, resources and/or knowledge to establish Language Access. And/or there are so many priorities, this will end up falling to the wayside.*

- Start small and build up from there! Using plain language is free and really expands accessibility!
- Give yourself a deadline: by the end of this fiscal year I will have achieved x Language Access goal. Once completed, identify your next goal.
- Consider working with an accountability partner. This could be somebody internal to your municipality or team, who you can touch based with regularly. This could be an external community-based partner. This could be someone from a different municipality doing similar work.

# Language Access & Policy



# Language Access & Policy

Language access impacts people daily, in every aspect of their lives. Our solutions for language access should include local, regional, state and national strategies. Language access across communities could include:

- Multilingual signage at transportation stations and stops
- Immediate on-demand interpretation availability in town and city halls and/or in schools
- Community events hosted in languages other than English, and much more!

Language Justice means every person can feel welcomed, included and able to participate. This should be possible from when they leave their home, wherever they go and regardless of the language needs they may have. Policy allows us to integrate those language access solutions into our day to day.

## Municipal Policies

Many communities have been able to advance language access through municipal policy. This allows for a consistent approach and can help mandate the creation of a Language Access Plan, which can in turn set norms and standards for all staff to follow. **For more information on Language Access Plans**, [click here](#).

Below are examples of ordinances under taken by local municipalities:

- [City of Boston Ordinance](#)
- [City of Cambridge Ordinance](#)

### **Key components to include in your policy:**

- It is an unlawful practice to deny any person or group equal access to services in employment, housing, education, recreation or other areas where such denial is based on limited English language skills.
- Budget for Language Access. For more information on budgeting for Language Access, please click [here](#).
- Requirement that all translation and interpretation be provided through a certified interpreter or translator.
- Inclusion of cultural review for translation and interpretation services
- Requirement that multilingual staff be compensated for any additional language work they do on top of their defined job.
- Defined role for a Language Access Staff position within your municipality or organization. **For more on Language Access and Staffing**, [click here](#).
- Regular evaluation points and feedback opportunities.

It may take time to build up to a full ordinance or municipal policy on Language Access. **To learn more about how you can build up municipal investment in language access**, [click here](#).

## State Policies

**The current executive order for Language Access put in place by Governor Healey (Executive Order 615) requires executive department state agencies to develop Language Access Plans.** This order will expand access to services across language and accessibility needs, and MAPC was excited to see the Governor prioritize Language Access through this order. However, we recognize the need for longer term sustainable solutions.

**An Act Relative to Language Access & Inclusion** (H. 3084/S. 1990) is one of **MAPC's 2023 Legislative Priorities**. MAPC supports the implementation of a comprehensive Language Access approach across public-facing state agencies. We see this as a path forward for establishing consistent language access across the commonwealth.



While this legislation would focus primarily on state agencies, we see this as fundamental to municipal success in establishing language access services consistently. To ensure that all residents have access to needed resources and services it is crucial when municipalities send their constituents to state agencies they know that they will be supported with the language and accessibility services they require. Currently, there are some state agencies that provide translation and accessibility services but these are not consistent or guaranteed.

The Act Relative to Language Access Inclusion was filed by Senator Sal Di Domenico and Representatives Madaro and Gonzalez. On October 30, 2023, the bill was favorably reported out of the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. You can learn more about the bill [here](#). And learn more about the [Mass Speaks Coalition here](#).

To learn about current State Regulatory information for Language Access, please [click here](#).

## How You Can Help

Contact your legislators today and urge them to support An Act Relative to Language Access & Inclusion (H. 3084/S. 1990). [Take action here!](#)

## Federal Policies

As you're thinking about policy change at the local and state level, it may be helpful to keep in mind the federal policies that can help guide local and state work.

- Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II
- Federal Executive Order 13166 (2000)

# Language Access & DEI Work

## Language, Culture & Race

Communication is how we build community, and is an essential piece to progress. Language is at the core of how community members engage with each other, build relationships, express their needs and celebrate culture. . Institutions play a vital role in eliminating the current barriers in their existing structures for those in need of services but who are unable to access them due to language. These barriers are not just dependent on individual needs, but a larger system structure that we must examine.

## Strategic alignment with equity priorities

In order to support initiatives and partnerships, Language Access must be at the forefront of such ventures. Assessing community needs and municipal mission/vision will be key in making this actionable. If the goal is an equitable outcome, significant emphasis must be placed on creating an equitable process. Equity priorities should incorporate/encompass/assess Language Access to fully meet the needs of fellow constituents

Language Access intersects with race, immigration, and other aspects of identity. It ensures that everyone has access to the information they need to navigate the systems of government, find resources, and more generally, advocate for themselves and their interests. Language Access is part of language justice work, and translation and interpretation services are branches of language access, but not its limits.

Language Justice is part of diversity, equity and inclusion work, but needs careful attention because of the many places where it intersects with other identities as noted above. Language Access should have its own dedicated resources and support staff to oversee this work, in collaboration with Directors of DEI.

# Language Access Glossary & Roundtable Summaries



# Language Access Glossary

We hope this can help you and external partners in your Language Service Procurement work, please read below important information on how to use this tool.

One of our partners, Malden: Language Access department created and assisted with the creation of the Language Access Translations Glossary:

- [Click Here](#) to Access the Translations Glossary

- Translated Languages include:

Spanish

Haitian Creole

Arabic

Brazilian Portuguese

Simplified Chinese

Vietnamese

- Please feel free to pull from terms as needed in your multilingual service provision

We are very appreciative of the Malden's Office of Language Access efforts and support!

As we think about utilizing this resource moving forward, here are some things to keep in mind:

- We hope that this can be a tool to support you in your translation procurement.
- This resource should be used to advance current language access (translations) on current and future projects.
- By having this resource, we hope that you can spend budget to expand your services.
  - Example: (With the assumption that you have budgeted for translations on a project)  
If translations quoted cost for an event totals \$500; by having this resource available, you realize that some terms/phrases that were submitted to the vendor overlap with some of the terms/phrases within the LATG, you save \$200.00.
  - Now that you have \$200 available, you can think deeper about the experience you want attendees to have at your event. Utilizing those \$200 to create a more enriching experience.
- If you would like to add terms to this Glossary, please email Najee Nunnally (nnunnally@mapc.org) and Sasha Parodi (sparodi@mapc.org)

# Tech Tools for Language Access

The foundational pillars of Digital Equity inform digital tools and language access:

- broadband access,
- device access
- and digital equity.

All three things contribute to Digital Access & Digital Inclusion. Additionally, digital inclusion is a great social determinant of health. Digital inclusion touches upon all other social determinants of health (economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context).

To learn more about MAPC's Digital Equity work, [please click here](#).

Below, we highlight the different tools available that can be utilized or purchased to meet your community needs:

As a reminder, this is not exhaustive but rather a starting point. These tools are also not a one size fits all. Please continue to seek out the right tools for you and your communities.

## Digital Tools for Language Access

**This is a website that will help identify:**

- Sentences that are difficult to read
- Estimated grade level you are writing at.
- Words or phrases with simpler alternatives

### ***CART Services***

- American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation is a fundamental component of Language Access. However, not all people with hearing needs speak American Sign Language. For this reason, provision of CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation) Services is another crucial tool for those who are D/deaf or hard of hearing. Simply put, this service provides subtitles for live discussions. This is a particularly useful tool when engaging virtually (Ex. Zoom; Municipal public forum).
- Please see Language Access & ADA Section for more information.

**Home ([plainlanguage.gov](http://plainlanguage.gov)).**

This is a website that will support you in creating plain language for materials to be interpreted.

### **Tech Goes Home**

Gold standard for digital literacy training, expanding throughout the state.

- Many folks are connected to internet. However, the folks who connect through their phones may not be able to access everything.
- New font packs, interesting language that uses roman alphabet. Interesting balance

***Platforms used by community members like Whatsapp***

## Physical Tools for Language Access

### *Assisted Listening Devices: Simultaneous Interpreter Equipment*

- Plan to supply assisted listening device(s) at your events. These devices can be very useful for those hard of hearing, particularly when in a relatively large space.
  - Ensure that the device(s) and components are fully charged and functional ahead of the event.
  - Make sure to clean devices after each individual use.

### *Tablet Access/Devices*

- Explore opportunities to have such devices available for residents/community members entering your establishment seeking services.
- Seek to have more than 1 device available (minimum 2);
- Ensure that these devices are up to date (hardware and software);
- Identify procedure/system when the device(s) malfunction;
- Create training opportunities for staff overseeing/supporting device usage;
- Ensure the device has a case on it to protect it against physical damage.

### *Wi-Fi Hotspot*

- These can be used to expand capacity within an establishment (I.e when cellular service may be weak or not strong);
- Can be used while providing support in the community (I.e Community Engagement activities);
- Ensure the device can cover broad distance;
- Ensure the device is password protected. This provides a base layer of security for the organization and individual utilizing the network.

Ultimately, no matter what technology you use, it will only take you so far. Fundamentally, providing meaningful language access starts with each of us. “All tech problems are solvable, it’s the people!” Often technology can amplify the work we are already doing. We want to be sure that on the flipside it is not replacing that human connection and care, which are so fundamental to how we create vibrant, welcoming, just communities.



#### **Tip**

Assisted listening devices can often double as interpretation devices. This can be a great way to invest in technology that serves multiple purposes.

# Roundtable Summaries & Notes

The monthly roundtables offered an opportunity for practitioners to discuss Language Access.

## Participants include:

- Municipal staff who do Language Access work;
- Municipal staff who are establishing Language Access in their community;
- Municipal staff looking to start Language Access in their community;
- Staff from regional and state offices of Language and Communications Access;
- Language Services providers, such as:
  - Translation and interpretation companies,
  - community based organizations,
  - and community advocates.

## Topics:

### *Language Services Procurement*

#### Summary:

- This roundtable explored municipal procurement for language services. This included discussion of best practices and strategies.

#### Speakers:

- Allison Zimmon, Legal Counsel, MAPC
- Farah Kamran, President, Indus Translations

#### Key points shared:

- You need to know how much money you have for Language Access, and what the source of that money is.
- When requesting interpretation, make sure to include whether you are looking for simultaneous or consecutive interpreting.
- If you are working with a partner, make it clear who is responsible for the process.
- Make sure to check the State Contract List for approved vendors by the State!

#### Resources shared:

- [State Contract User Guide for Language Access Procurement](#)
- [City of Boston Demographic Data Reports](#)

*To learn more about Language Access & Procurement, [click here](#).*





## Case Study *How Do Other Municipalities Do It?*

### Summary:

- This roundtable offered an opportunity for participants to hear from municipalities who have established Language Access Services. Speakers shared about how they established services, how their departments function, success and challenges, as well as applicable recommendations for other communities.

### Speakers:

- Jeniffer Vivar Wong, Executive Director, Mayor's Office of Communications & Language Access, City of Boston
- Michelle Tyler, Director of Planning, Town of Randolph

### Key points shared:

- Municipalities and organizations need Language Access policy to provide long-term language services.
- It is important to invest in proper equipment and staff training.
- Plain Language is fundamental to Language Justice.
- Your services need to be relevant to the cultures of the people you are serving. Providing services is not enough, they also need to be understood.

### Resources shared:

- Civic Design: <https://civicdesign.org/about/>

*To learn more about Language Access Plans, [click here](#).*

*To learn more about Language Access & Policy [click here](#).*

*To learn more about Investment in Sustainable Language Access [click here](#).*

## *Language Access & Cultural Belonging:*

### Summary:

This roundtable addressed the importance of going beyond provision of language services to ensure that people feel welcomed and supported in their cultural identities.

### Speakers:

- Cambridge Community Learning Center CET Co-Leaders:
  - Lindsay Diaz
  - Marlees Owayda
- MAPC Arts & Culture Fellow, Archana Menon

### Key points shared:

- There is no check list for creating cultural belonging. You need to work together with people, hear how they want to feel seen and welcomed, and adapt. This requires slowing down. When we don't slow down, we are choosing an inequitable process. When we don't slow down, or adapt, we only hear from the people who are already able to show up.
- We're not all going to know everything and get everything right about one another. But we can create spaces where people can bring their culture, and learn from the culture of others.
- Questions to consider as you design your spaces:
  - How are you making sure people feel safe participating, regardless of immigration status?
  - How are you delivering your services?
  - How are you training staff to welcome people with other cultural identities?
- Offer transparency about your intentions to build trust.



## Case Study *Language Access: iPad Pilot Project*

### Summary:

- Beverly's School District piloted a program in which they used iPads to for on demand language services. This allowed them to better communicate with parents who spoke languages other than English. The project also provided indicators for the needs of Beverly's different linguistic communities. Some of the takeaways from that program were:

### Speakers:

- Caitlyn Belleza, Director of English Learner Education

### Key points shared:

- Engagement is different for everyone. It is important to adapt for people's different communication styles;
- Gather data to identify key languages to target;
- Over the phone interpretation has been very successful;
- Knowledge is huge – if people know what services they can request, they are more likely to do so;
- Think about long-term language access – providing English Language training through local partners;
- Funding continues to be a big challenge for implementing these potential changes.

## *Disability & Language Access*

### Summary:

- Speakers from the MA Office on Disability joined this roundtable to discuss the intersection of Disability and Language Access. As noted in the guide's introduction, Language Access includes all forms of communications access, including tools that support people with disabilities in receiving information and/or communicating.

### Speakers:

- Julia O'Leary, General Counsel, MA Office on Disability
- Jon O'Dell, Assistive Technology Manager & Training Specialist for the MA Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

### Key points shared:

- Plan ahead for communication access. It is harder to retrofit afterwards. Think about it early and often. Book resources well in advance.
- Hire CART Services early. Work with CART Service providers to appropriately incorporate them into your event.
- Technology is rarely a barrier these days. Platforms we use are underestimated because they update so often. That being said, most services are best when provided by a live person.
- 1.4 million people in Commonwealth have hearing loss. There will be people with hearing loss at your events. Don't assume otherwise, and work with people to understand their needs.

### Resources shared:

- To make CART or ASL Requests [click here](#)
- Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program may be able to support the work [click here](#)
- On Massachusetts Office On Disability Youtube Page [click here](#)
  - Information on how to make meeting more accessible

*To learn more about Language Access & Disability Access, [click here](#).*

## ***Municipal Investment in Language Access***

### **Summary:**

- In this roundtable we explored strategies for putting dollars into Language Access Services. This included thinking about advocacy approaches, how to get buy-in from key stakeholders, how to budget for Language Access (and what to budget for), and how to scale your strategy, if funding is low.

### **Speakers:**

- Faustina Cuevas, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, City of Lynn
- Bernardo Llorente, Manager of Translation & Interpretation Services, Framingham Public Schools
- Jillian Harvey, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Director & Teresa Marzilli, Community Engagement & Outreach Coordinator, Town of Arlington

### **Key points shared:**

- Resources and budget are typically the biggest barriers to establishing sustainable language access practices;
- Sustainability of Language Access is contingent on having dedicated staff and dedicated staff time to do the work that is necessary for Language Access to move forward consistently;
- It is helpful to start on a smaller scale and build from there;
- Data can help inform how to prioritize language access work, especially with limited budget and/or staff time.

## ***Departmentalizing & Language Access Policy***

### **Summary:**

- This roundtable explored how policy and department structure can contribute to establishing sustainable language access practices. The City of Boston shared about their structure and programming, and the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute shared about an Act Relative to Language Access & Inclusion, and advocacy opportunities related to it.

### **Speakers:**

- Jeniffer Vivar Wong, Executive Director of City of Boston Office of Language & Communication Access.
- Iris Coloma-Gaines, Language Access Attorney at Massachusetts Law Reform Institute.

### **Key points shared:**

- Policy allows for structure to form. Language Access policy is needed on local, state, and federal level to achieve the degree of support that people deserve.
- Prioritize building capacity for departments or staff to do the Language Access work themselves.
- Bilingual staff are necessary to the workplace. However, bilingual staff should not be asked to do translation and interpretation unless they have been trained and paid to do so.
- Language Access services benefit everyone, not only a smaller subset of people.

### **Resources shared:**

- Language and Communications Access-City of Boston-MAPC Presentation-Google Slides [click here](#)
- Language Access and Inclusion Act Fact sheet [click here](#)
- MassSpeaks Coalition Sign Up [click here](#)
- Language Access and Inclusion Act Legislative Briefing Recording [click here](#)
- Legislative Briefing Article [click here](#)
- Mass Speaks Social Media Toolkit [click here](#)

# Conclusion & Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We hope that in it you can find information, prompting questions or tools to help you on your own Language Access journey. We hope that you remember that you are not alone in moving this work forward, and there is a community here to support you. Most importantly, we hope that you keep exploring, learning and trying. It is through the actions of each of us individually that makes collective change possible. We can move towards that change together.

If you would like to discuss this guide, Language Access training, or other shared practices for meaningful community engagement and public participation, please reach out to MAPC's Community Engagement Team. You can learn more about us [here](#).

If you would like to join the Language Access Municipal Network, which meets monthly to discuss language access questions, learn from each other and work through challenges together, please click [here](#).

We would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this guide:

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