

Effective Multilingual Meetings

Sponsored by the Association of Bay Area Governments

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Disclaimer: These materials were produced by A Simple Translation for a workshop hosted by ABAG. The materials have not been formally reviewed by ABAG.

Welcome & Introductions

Activity 1. The Icebreaker

At your table, 1 min/person. Introduce yourselves. Move on to the next person when you hear the chime. If still speaking when you hear it, wrap up in the next 10 seconds. Prompts:

1. **Your name** (or name you prefer to be called, if not on your name card)
2. **Your role**
3. **Answer A or B:**
 - a. **Does/did your family speak/spoke another language, including sign language?**
Or
 - b. Share about a time when you or someone you know **was impacted by a lack of Language Access or inadequate language access**, either in this country or abroad.
4. **What impact, if any, did A or B have on how you view language access?**

Pre-Training Assessment

[Menti.com 5712 8379](https://www.menti.com/join/57128379)



Resources

Resources Commissioned by ABAG

- Glossary of Planning & related terms, translated into:
 - Simplified Chinese
 - Spanish
 - Tagalog/Filipino
 - Vietnamese
- Multilingual Access Handbook
- Quick Reference Guide [Series of Checklists]
- Short introductory videos on key handbook topics
- Today's training!

Framing Meaningful Language Access

Key Definitions

- **Communicative Autonomy**
- **Interpretation**
- **Language Access Plan**
- **Meaningful Language Access**
- **Translation**



Communicative Autonomy

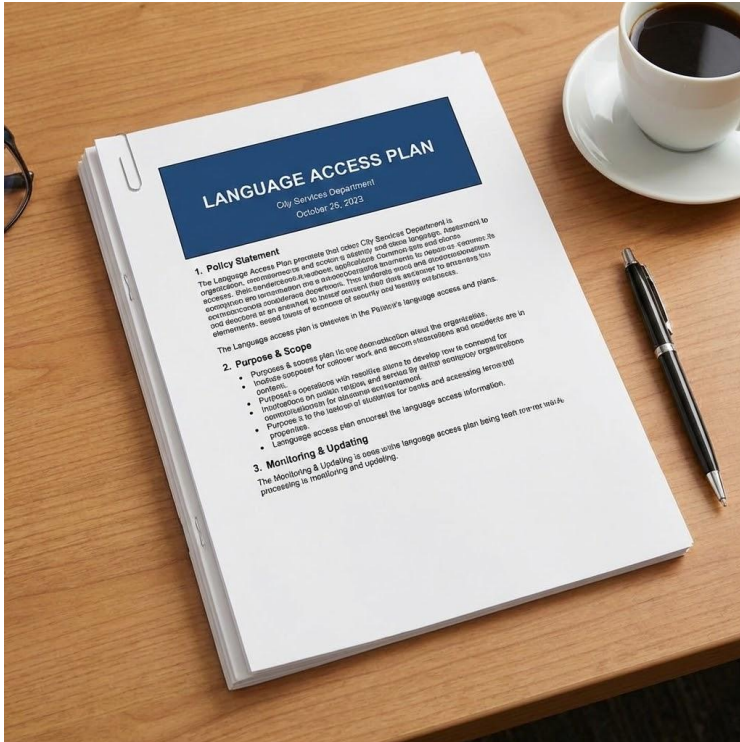
The capacity of all parties in an interpreted encounter to be responsible for and in control of their own communication.

Interpretation



The **verbal** or **signed** rendering of a message from one language into another

Language Access Plan



It is a document that describes the jurisdiction's policy and practices to provide meaningful access to programs, services and activities to everyone in the community with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Meaningful Language Access

Language Assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the individual with LEP needing assistance.

Meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English-proficient individuals.

(Language Access Plan, U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Revised January 2025)

Translation



The **written** rendering of a message from one language into another

The 3P'S of Meaningful Language Access: Policy, Process & People

1. **Policy:** A Language Access Plan/Language Access Ordinance
2. **Process:** The specific protocols & workflows designed and implemented to safeguard the equitable access to information, resources and services for everyone in the community, regardless of language
3. **People:**
 - a. The ones whose language access rights must be protected
 - b. The ones charged with protecting these rights

1. Policy

Key Factors in Meaningful Language Access:

- Effective communication
- Identification of language needs
- How the service is provided
 - a. Qualified interpreters and/or certified bilingual Public Contact Employees (PCE) for in-language services
- Accurate translation of key documents
- Meetings and processes that are meaningfully accessible
- Biennial survey
- Staff training

Applicable laws at a glance

Legal Context

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- California Constitution (Equal Protection Clause) - Fair treatment under the law
- California's Ralph M. Brown Act - Transparency in government decision-making
- California's Dymally–Alatorre Bilingual Services Act - Language Access to public services
- California's Unruh Civil Rights Act - Equal treatment in business & services

2. Process

What it means in practice:

If people cannot understand or meaningfully participate due to language barriers, the process may be legally deficient. Language access enables meaningful participation and protects the integrity of public decision-making...**today's main objective is to develop capacity in this area.**

2. People

Who is protected:

Individuals whose primary language is a language other than English (aka, Limited English Proficiency or LEP).

Who must protect it (who are the gatekeepers):

Everyone with decision-making power, public-facing responsibility, whose work in any way impacts language access for members of the community.

Activity 2. Identify Strengths or Potential Gaps

Part I. Individual work (10 minutes)

Based on the previous framing, take 10 minutes to answer the first three questions in Activity 2.

Part II. Discuss your conclusions with your table (10 mins)

Be prepared to share key conclusions with the whole group.

Part III. Whole group discussion (10 minutes)

Have your red and green cards ready!

7 Key Objectives of a Language Access Plan

1. Effective Communication
2. Identification of need
3. The means through which language access will be provided
4. Notification of availability of services
5. Staff Training
6. Quality Control and Evaluation
7. Resource Allocation

1. Effective communication

- Accurate
- Timely
- Effective

2. Identification of need

Federal mandates: 4-factor analysis

- Number or proportion of LEP individuals in jurisdiction
- Frequency of contact
- Importance of service
- Resources available and costs

California, more stringent: 5% threshold

- This is usually determined using the U.S. Census data, through the American Community Survey (ACS)

Survey **CBO's, School Districts, Health Dept. data.**

- Impacted areas may not be representative of citywide data

3. Provision of Language Access Services through:

- Certified bilingual staff
- Translation of vital documents
- Use of qualified interpreters*
 - See “The Profile of the Ideal Community Interpreter

Breaking Down: Certified Bilingual Staff

- How is staff certified?
- Which staff should be certified
 - Public Contact Employee (PCE)
- How do you determine how many staff members should be certified to serve the public in-language?

Breaking Down: Translation of Vital Docs

- What's vital in the context of your project?
- LAFLA example

Breaking Down: Use of Qualified Interpreters

The profile of a qualified interpreter:

- **Accurate**
- **Confidentiality**-centered
- **Culturally aware** (and humble)
- **Impartial**
- **Professional**
- Promotes **Direct Communication**
- **Role-bound**
- **Transparent**

4. Notification of Availability of Services

- “I speak...” language cards and posters
- Language buttons on project/department’s website’s main page
 - Buttons lead to vital information
- Public notices in the languages of the community

5. Staff Training

Frequency

- Upon hiring
- Annual refresher training

Areas of training

- Cultural & linguistic sensitivity
- How to work with language service providers
- How to prepare to facilitate inclusive meetings
- Others?

6. Quality Control & Evaluation

- Quality Control practices during actual meeting
- Brief accessible questionnaire as part of general evaluation
- Periodic comprehensive surveys (annual/biannual?)

7. Resource Allocation

- Staff
- Funds
- Time

Example of LAP Compliance Checklist

- ☒ ID number of languages and type of language services
- ☒ ID training needs & provide training (w/in 6 months of hiring, annually thereafter)
- ☒ Assess training effectiveness
- ☒ Assess staff awareness of LA policies and procedures
- ☒ Assess effectiveness of interpretation and translation services
- ☒ Check-in with community partners and key constituents
- ☒ Track costs of providing LA services
- ☒ Data collection

Activity 3. CA's 5% Threshold for LA

Determine which languages meet California's 5% threshold in your jurisdiction. On your computer, phone or tablet (preferably a computer!), follow these steps:

1. Go to: data.census.gov
2. Tables
3. Search: **Table S1601** (Language Spoken at Home - Summary)
4. Filters
5. Geography: Place
6. Within Other Geographies: California (select it after you select "Place")
7. Search: Enter city name
8. Survey: American Community Survey (ACS) - usually the default
9. Year: Select most recent available year, 2024 as of Feb 2026
10. Select: ACS 5-year Estimates (more comprehensive)

Outreach

Culturally & Linguistically Sensitive Outreach

- Designing outreach *with* communities, rather than *for* them
- Language access across the engagement lifecycle:
 - Outreach & promotion
 - Registration & intake
 - Meetings & workshops
 - Follow-up and feedback

Culturally & Linguistically Sensitive Outreach

- Selecting languages strategically
 - (data + community insight)
- Understanding the various media channels available to you
- Working with community-based partners

Local Media Outlets

Sample radio outlets (illustrative):

- Spanish: KBBF 89.1 FM, 105.7 FM, 96.9 FM; Radio Bilingüe
- Cantonese: KVTO 1400 AM; KEST 1450 AM
- Mandarin: KSJX 1500 AM & 96.1 FM

TV (illustrative, for Spanish language)

- Telemundo
- Univision

Local Media Outlets

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Identify platforms commonly used by target communities
 - Hispanic immigrant communities: Facebook (Marketplace, Live & Reels included) & Instagram
 - Chinese immigrant communities: WeChat
- Evaluate TikTok and other platforms as appropriate
 - Use short, culturally and linguistically sensitive videos when applicable
 - Increase accessibility for:
 - Low literacy levels
 - Neurodiverse audiences

Local Media Outlets

Sample outlets for Spanish in the Bay Area (illustrative):

- El Tecolote (SF)
- El Observador
- El Tímpano
- Alianza News
- La Oferta

Your turn!
Comments and Questions



San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority Case Study

- Margaret Bruce, Executive Director

Working Effectively with Language Service Providers

Language Service Providers

- Types of LSPs: agencies vs. independent contractors
- What planners need to know before engaging LSPs
- Interpretation and translation
 - How will the job be performed
 - Who will perform it
 - What are the costs associated with each type of service?
 - Think of value added vs price
- Ethical considerations
- Common procurement and coordination mistakes

Translation Considerations

- **Human Translator.** Still the best option if you have trained professionals. Most work with a CAT tool to avoid duplication of work, enable team collaboration, standardize translations.
 - If you have in-house translation, consider some popular CAT tools:
 - MemoQ
 - Trados
 - WordFast (not good for collaboration, but a practical tool for a one-person project)
 - Crowdin is a newer option (this is used to crowdsource projects but you can have a closed team collaboration)

Translation Considerations

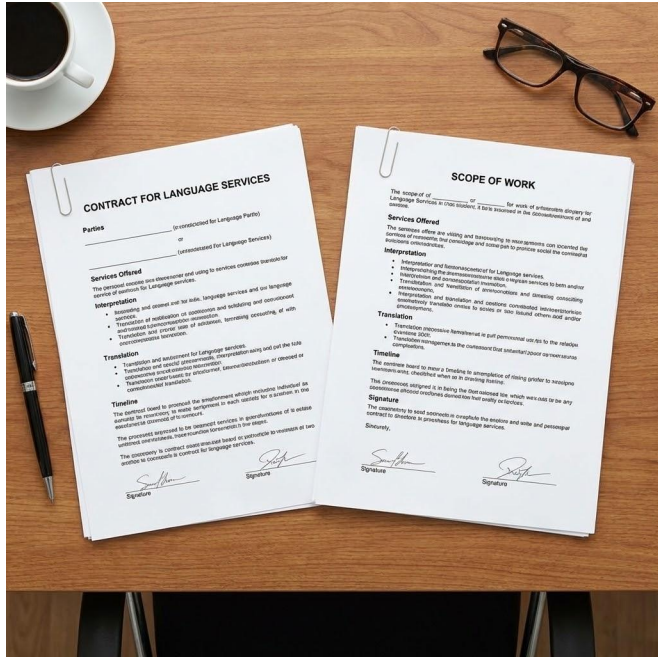
- **Machine Translation (MT) with Post-Editing (MTPE)**
 - MT never without a trained reviewer
 - Several platforms with varying degrees of accuracy
 - DeepL is considered the most reliable and nuanced, but it still shows inconsistencies, mistranslations, needs localization, etc.
 - Other less reliable platforms: Amazon, Microsoft, Google, others
 - Remember also, Garbage In, Garbage Out (GIGO).

Translation Considerations

Whether a human translator or MTPE, discuss:

- Whether a per word or per hour rate
- Rush translations
- Language tier (some languages are pricier than others)
- What is a reasonable turnaround time
- Cancellation policy
- Style Guide & Glossary
 - Who owns it, maintains it and approves it

Quality & Risk Management in ICA's & SOW's



- Why specific language about who, what, how, and when in the contract matters for language access quality and risk management
- Key elements of Independent Contractor Agreements (ICA's)
- Drafting an effective Scope of Work (SOW)

Quality & Risk Management in ICA's & SOW's

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Drafting an effective Scope of Work

- Services and modalities
- Languages and volumes
- Deliverables and timelines
- Rates (service, travel time, mileage, minimums, cancellations)
- Confidentiality and data protection

Review a fictitious LSP Contract

Disclaimer: This is not intended as legal advice, please consult your own legal department for legal guidance.

Independent Contractor Agreement or Vendor Agreement, as well as SOW shown on screen.

1. What are some of the things that stand out to you in the attached Independent Contractor Agreement (ICA)?
2. What stands out in the Scope of Work (SOW)?

Activity 4. Profile of a Qualified Interpreter

Instructions:

Your table has been given a card with a scenario related to one principle from The Community Interpreter Code of Ethics and a card that briefly describes those principles. Eight (8) of your colleagues have those principles.

1. Pick the principle you think relates to your scenario
 2. Talk about the negative implications of the decisions made by the interpreter
- Table discussion (5 mins)
 - Find your match (5 mins)
 - Whole group discussion (10 mins)

Eight (8) Ethical Principles for The Community Interpreter

- **Confidentiality:** Treating all information as private and adhering to strict disclosure requirements.
- **Accuracy:** Ensuring a complete and faithful rendering of the original message without adding, omitting, or substituting.
- **Impartiality:** Refraining from bias, counseling, or advising; managing conflicts of interest.
- **Transparency:** Maintaining an open process, including reporting all interventions or mediation to all parties.
- **Direct Communication:** Facilitating conversation directly between parties (often using first-person) to ensure the interpreter remains unobtrusive.
- **Professional Boundaries:** Maintaining clear limits, not acting as a social worker, legal counsel, or advocate.
- **Intercultural Communication (Cultural Awareness):** Acting as a cultural broker to bridge understanding, not just words.
- **Professional Conduct:** Acting professionally, preparing for assignments, and continuing professional development.

Source: [Ethics & Standards for The Community Interpreter® - An International Training Tool](#)

Activity 5. A Few Minutes in the Life of an Interpreter

Overview:

(5 mins total)

- A volunteer will take the interpreter's place and follow the speaker in the same language (shadowing)
- The audience will listen to the interpreter and the speaker and take note of anything that stands out

- (10 mins) Whole group discussion

Activity 5. A Few Minutes in the Life of an Interpreter

Questions for the volunteer:

1. How do you feel right now?
2. Were you able to follow along smoothly?
3. Were there any concerns, things you wish had gone differently? If so, what?

Activity 5. A Few Minutes in the Life of an Interpreter

Questions for the audience:

1. How was the overall experience?
2. Did you feel anything was omitted in the interpreter's rendering?
3. Any additional thoughts as to what may have contributed to problems with the rendering, if any?
4. How do you feel?

Preparing Presenters & facilitators



Prep for Translation & Interpretation:

- ❑ If the meeting is interpreted, slides must also be translated
- ❑ Bilingual decks are better than separate decks
- ❑ Work closely with translators & interpreters



Key considerations

Delivery/facilitation:

- ❑ Plain language
- ❑ Aware of language & ADA, WCAG
- ❑ Using a good sound system
- ❑ Thoughtful speed (100 wpm rule)
- ❑ Inclusive meeting engagement practices

Activity 6. A Few Minutes in the Public's Shoes

Have your headset ready, this activity involves a listening exercise, where you'll listen to a few minutes of interpretation into English

- Take notes of anything that stands out to you

After the exercise:

- Have your green/red cards ready (Y/N). Not everyone will have a chance to chime in audibly, but you can indicate your feelings about it through these cards

Aneuploidía

Una forma común de aneuploidía es la trisomía o la presencia de un cromosoma extra en las células. En griego, “tri” significa “tres”. Las personas con trisomía tienen tres copias de un cromosoma particular en las células en lugar de las dos copias normales. El síndrome de Down (también conocido como trisomía 21) es un ejemplo de una afección causada por trisomía. Las personas con síndrome de Down suelen tener tres copias del cromosoma 21 en cada célula, para un total de 47 cromosomas por célula.

Shoreline protection features

- Levees
- Floodwalls
- Hybrid structure (when space is limited)

Elementos de protección de la costa

- Diques
- Muros de contención
- Estructura híbrida (cuando el espacio está reducido)

Activity 6. [Continued]

1. How was the exercise? Be honest, Omar and I can take it!
2. Did this exercise give you any perspective into some of the reasons interpretation may fail?
3. Share one issue you noticed and a best practice that would address it

Public Engagement Meetings



Logistics & Budget for Language Access

- [Not an exhaustive list. Refer to the Handbook and Quick Reference Guide for more information]

Logistics & Budget: General Considerations

Minimum considerations regardless of meeting modality (in-person, virtual or hybrid)

- Determine accessibility needs
 - Spoken Language(s)
 - ASL
 - Other accessibility needs (i.e., close captioning)
- For every spoken language or ASL, normally you'll need to
 - Hire 2 interpreters per language, unless bilingual breakouts
 - What are their hourly fees and other fees? Do they have a minimum?
 - Determine length of interpreter assignment
 - When do interpreters need to arrive and leave?

Logistics & Budget: General Considerations II

- Determine a reasonable deadline to produce source materials, scheduling enough time for translation
- Develop a plan for translation:
 - Designing a layout that facilitates creating bilingual documents
 - What will be translated and how
 - Human Internal or external translator
 - Machine Translation with Post-Editing
- Budgeting for a prep meeting (or more, depending on the project) with all the interpreters and facilitators

Logistics & Budget: In-Person Meetings

- Sound system. If one is not available:
 - Buying it?
 - Renting it?
 - Borrowing it?
- Decisions about interpretation equipment::
 - Renting it, buying it or borrowing it from another department?
 - Are there enough devices/headsets for every monolingual speaker?
 - Who'll manage the equipment?
- Interpreters:
 - Where will they be stationed?
 - How will they do the announcements at the top of the meeting
 - Who's their staff liaison?

Logistics & Budget: In-Person Meetings

- Sound system. If one is not available:
 - Buying, renting or borrowing it? Do you have enough mics?
- Decisions about interpretation equipment::
 - Renting, buying or borrowing it from another department?
 - Are there enough devices/headsets for every monolingual speaker?
 - Who'll manage the equipment?
- Interpreters:
 - Where will they be stationed?
 - How will they do the announcements at the top of the meeting
 - Who's their staff liaison?

Logistics & Budget: Virtual & Hybrid

- If virtual:
 - Is the right account available for the meeting needs (webinar vs meeting, interpretation function)?
 - Dedicated tech staff
- If hybrid:
 - See the [Hybrid Meeting with Interpretation section](#) for equipment and staff needs

Basic Back-End Hybrid Components



1. One main computer



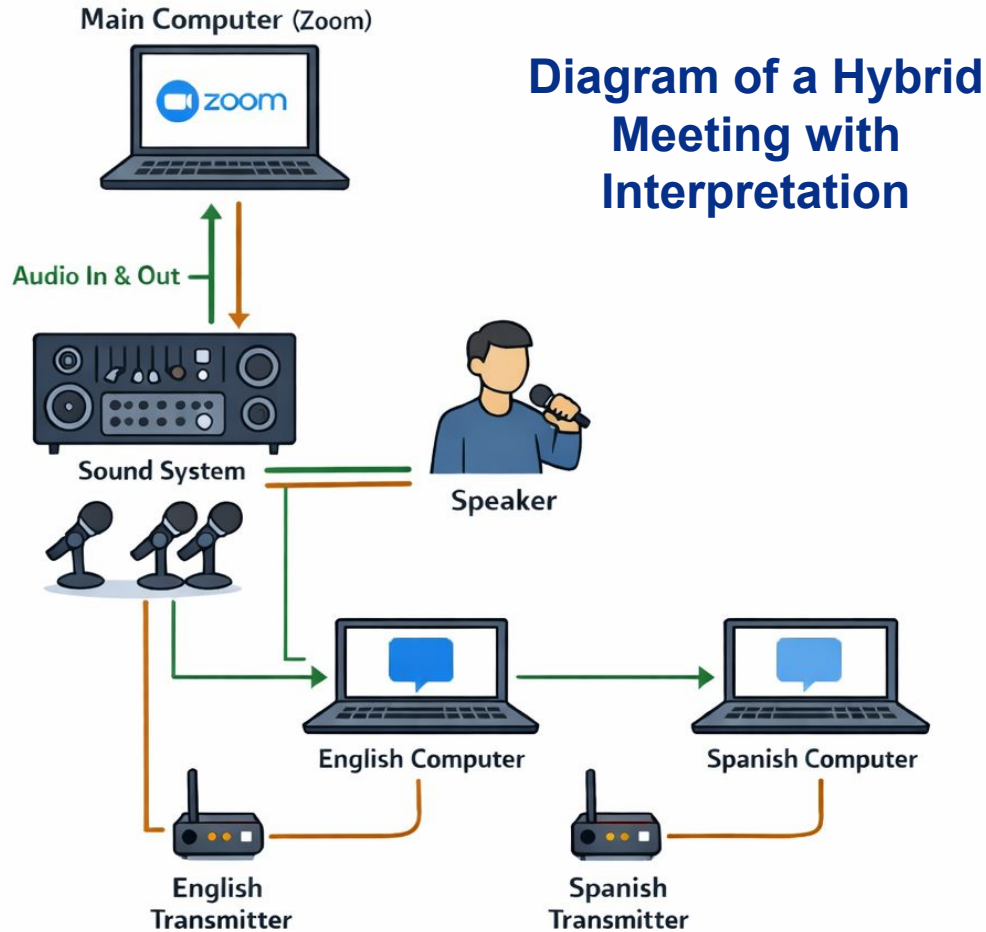
2. One computer/language



3. One transmitter/language



4. An external sound system with microphones



Generated using AI*

Activity 7. It's A Collective Effort!

Materials:

- Key LAP Objective cards (green)
- Best practice cards

Instructions:

- If you take a Key Language Access (LAP) Objective card (green), stand at the front or side of the room holding your card visibly
- If you take a Best Practice card, walk around the room until you find your match.
- There are 2 or 3 Best Practice cards per Key Objective card.
- Both parties need to agree on every match.



Back-end setup

How the components of the back-end set up connect audio, interpreters and participants in a hybrid meeting. This image doesn't include the interpreter set up or participant headphones.

Feedback

Go to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com)
Enter 7220 8144
or scan this QR code



Thank You!