

NAVIGATING TOWARDS LANGUAGE JUSTICE

A Toolkit for
Organizational
Change



Wave

a Language Liberation Hub

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
About Wave.....	6
Staff.....	7
Board of Directors.....	7
Introduction.....	9
About This Toolkit.....	9
How to Use This Toolkit.....	11
Who It's For.....	13
Shared Definitions.....	14
Establishing a foundation for your Language Justice Work.....	19
First Things First: Creating a Language Justice Vision Statement.....	19
Assessing How Your Organization is Doing with Language Justice.....	27
Resourcing a Multilingual Future.....	29
A Note on Language Access Responsibilities.....	36
Putting Language Justice Into Practice.....	40
Tools for Combatting Linguicism.....	40
Interpretation Overview.....	46
Translation Overview.....	56
Creating Style Guides & Glossaries.....	63
Multilingual Websites.....	68
Conclusion.....	73
Appendix.....	74



Acknowledgements

This toolkit is the result of decades of combined experience held by members of Wave's leadership team, as well as knowledge that our fellow Language Justice comrades shared and co-created with us. Over the last several years at Wave, we have used and refined the content and tools included here.

We owe special thanks to our many organizational participants and partners, both past and present, with whom we are constantly learning: Black South Rising, African Sisterhood Empowerment, LEAP Durham, US People Living with HIV Caucus, Sisterlove Inc., NC AIDS Action Network, Town of Chapel Hill, Latino Commission on AIDS, Refugee Community Partnership, IAJE, Latino LinQ, and Proyecto de Cuidado Integral de SIDA at Ryder Hospital. Many are pictured throughout the Toolkit. We offer a special shoutout to Venita Ray, who has accompanied Wave's Colibrí Academy in different iterations for several years, and whose feedback and encouragement have deeply informed our work. Thank you also to previous Colibrí Academy facilitators Ahmed Said and Omni Romero.

Parts of this toolkit build on work by Ana Paula Noguez Mercado, Jazmín Rumbaut, Trilce Santana, Alena Uliasz, Roberto Tijerina, Joann Lee, Roxy Chang, Liliana Sierra, ramelcy uribe, Jose Eduardo Sanchez, Leronald “Junior” Reid, Nayra Pacheco Guzman, and Monica Dennis. Our toolkit draws partially on work we did with tilde Language Justice Cooperative’s Capacity Building Team. It is also indirectly and directly influenced by other Language Justice toolkits/resources, such as Right to the City Alliance’s Language Justice: A Toolkit for Organizers, Communities Creating Healthy Environments’ Toolkit for Multilingual Community Organizing, and Move to End Violence’s Language Justice Reflections Workbook. We have made explicit attribution in any section where we have directly adapted material, and encourage readers to access those resources directly if interested.

Wave extends gratitude to the lands, waters, and beings that have nourished us while we do this work and that are themselves part of the work. Many of the languages used on the lands we at Wave currently occupy in Abya Yala (known as the Americas) have been systematically suppressed, leading to the loss of the knowledge and many world-views embodied and embedded in those languages. At the same time, there are many languages, knowledge systems, and worldviews that have survived centuries of colonization, enslavement, and forced migration, and we honor and pledge to support their preservation. Language Justice centers our interconnections across languages, and helps us chart new ways towards interdependence—amongst our neighbors, communities, and our planet.



About Wave

Wave - a Language Liberation Hub is a home for Language Justice workers and trainers who share a vision for growing our community of practice and the capacity of our movements and communities to create linguistic democracy.

Wave's programming intervenes on a capacity-building level, partnering with organizations to ensure that they have the tools to create and sustain the infrastructure required for Language Justice, as well as advocate for it within their own networks. Wave also works to directly support language workers, providing Interpretation for Social Justice training, and facilitating a Language Justice Network for mutual support and community-building amongst new and experienced language workers.

Staff

Co-directors/Co-founders

Yair Castellanos (he/him)

Allison Corbett (she/her)

Gloria Delgadillo (they/them)

Tony Macias (he/him)

Language Justice Network Organizer

Roxy Chang (she/her)

Board of Directors

Chair- Ahmed Said (he/him)

Secretary- Lama (she/her)

Treasurer- Roberto Tijerina (he/him)

Nicole Santamaría (she/her/we)

wendelin regalado (she/her/we/our)

www.wavelanguagehub.org

Language is Personal.

visceral, and powerful; it is tied to our lands and to our bodies. Every time we open our mouths to speak in our accents and dialects, we identify ourselves and bring all these things with us.

When we come together to have the hard conversations, it is important that we are able to express ourselves in

the language that most fully conveys the depth and nuance of our hopes and our frustrations.

-Roberto Tijerina, Highlander Research and Education Center

ROAN BUCHER

Introduction

About This Toolkit

Published: Fall 2025

Experience has taught us that language is personal, visceral, and powerful—it is connected to our wellbeing at the most fundamental level. Yet, for many of us, accessing important programs or spaces for collective action is nearly impossible if we can't participate in our own languages. This is because a majority of public institutions and community organizations operate from a “professional,” English-only model that permeates institutional culture. We are often further disenfranchised when our dialects or our way of communicating are not recognized or respected (users of rural dialects or Black English, for example). When we unite to demand opportunities as immigrants, or bodily autonomy and rights for all, including LGBTQI+ communities, language must not be a barrier but a tool for mutual connection and empowerment. This notion of justice moves us beyond the framework of access; Wave's goal is to use language as a tool for building community leadership and power across our many languages, dismantling language dominance so that linguistic democracy can flourish.

In the multilingual future that we dream of, all people can advocate for their own health and welfare, access quality and culturally responsive programs and services, and participate meaningfully in organizing to address issues of access, *regardless of the language(s) they speak*. Through our capacity-building collaborations with organizations and our efforts to support, train, and build solidarity amongst language workers, we labor towards systems change and culture shifts that can transform our communities and movements.

This toolkit is a direct result of our work accompanying organizations as they implement Language Justice principles and practices. We have used every aspect of this toolkit in our work with partners; it is the culmination of several years of trial and error. Here, we focus on the nitty gritty, the foundational and

operational processes that are needed to build Language Justice into an organization's workflows and culture.

All toolkits are a work in progress, and while this one contains a range of tools we and our partners have sharpened over recent years, more can and should be added over time as ideas, tools and resources evolve and as the contexts we work in shift. We would love to hear from our readers with any suggestions or feedback on the toolkit, or if you have questions and would like support when putting it to use.

In this introduction we share why we created this toolkit, how to use it, and who it's for. We also have a glossary for terms referenced throughout this resource. The following sections are: *Establishing a Foundation for your Language Justice work* and *Putting Language Justice Into Practice*. Before concluding, we hear from one of our partners, Black South Rising, about their journey incorporating Language Justice into their organization from the beginning. The appendix includes resources and practical examples to use in implementation.

Toolkit Team

Editor- Allison Corbett

Writers- Yair Castellanos, Allison Corbett, Gloria Delgadillo, and Tony Macias

How to Use This Toolkit

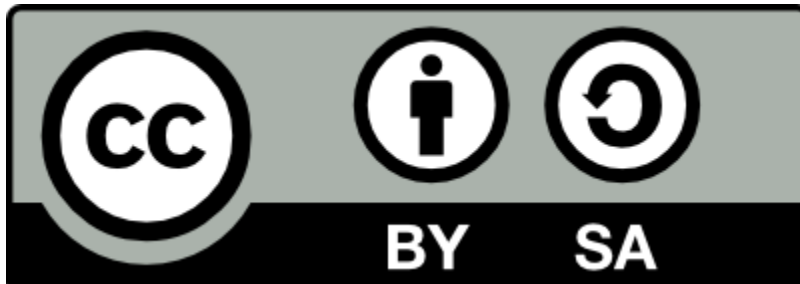
This toolkit is organized in order—beginning with building a sustainable foundation for Language Justice at the organizational level prior to implementation. At the same time, we invite the reader to use this toolkit in whatever order serves you and your organizational context. To facilitate that, we created a few entry points to this toolkit, so you'll notice that in addition to the full PDF version of the toolkit, we also have separate sections available for easy access on our website.

Once you have downloaded the full PDF you can also go directly to specific sections using the hyperlinked table of contents (note that if you are previewing the document and it is not fully downloaded you can't access links). Many of the sections also have accompanying templates and tools available in the Appendix.

We've chosen the imagery of a compass for this toolkit because we think of it as a series of guideposts to help you find your way towards what Language Justice looks like in its fullest expression for your organization at any given moment.

As language workers, everyone at Wave has benefited greatly from knowledge generously shared in the spirit of popular education, and we offer this toolkit in the same spirit. We would love for you to use it, remix it, and for fellow Language Justice practitioners to use our content as a tool for their own consulting and accompaniment work. That's exactly how we plan to use it too!

As such, this work is protected under the following Creative Commons License.



This license enables reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator. The license allows for commercial use. If you remix, adapt, or build upon the material, you must license the modified material under identical terms.



BY: credit must be given to the creator.



SA: Adaptations must be shared under the same terms.

At the moment, all of Wave's public facing materials, such as this toolkit, are produced in English, as we partner with groups and workers across many different languages. We recognize the contradictions and limitations inherent in that choice and embrace any efforts to translate this content into other languages.

How to cite this toolkit if you share or reuse it:

Wave - a Language Liberation Hub. Orienting Towards Language Justice: a Toolkit for Organizational Change. September 202

Who It's For

This toolkit is meant for anyone who finds it useful! When creating it, we imagined it being used by groups like the ones we often partner with at Wave: organizations that know Language Justice is important to them and their work, but need support to operationalize and embed it in their organizational culture. The toolkit would be especially useful for a new Language Justice Coordinator or a Language Justice Committee who can use this content while figuring out the first steps of putting Language Justice into practice at their organization.

This toolkit is meant to be useful to a range of organizations: those that primarily do community organizing or advocacy, service-providers, or those who fit somewhere in between. We also acknowledge that for some organizations, the greatest need for Language Justice lies outside of their internal practices and is primarily about organizing for linguistic equity across their communities and networks. We strive for this toolkit to be useful to those types of organizations as well.

Note, while there are some introductory pieces in this toolkit, it is not necessarily meant as a primer to learn about Language Justice as a framework. If you'd like more of an introduction, we recommend you start with some other great resources from our comrades, including:

- ★ [Language Justice: A Toolkit for Organizers](#) (2023) by Right to the City
- ★ [How to Build Language Justice](#) (2014, revised 2020) by Antena Aire
- ★ [Language Justice Toolkit: Strategies for Multilingual Organizing](#) (2012) by Communities Creating Healthy Environments

Want to share your thoughts, ask questions, or think together about how to practice Language Justice? Reach out! We'd love to hear from you:
hello@wavelanguagehub.org



Shared Definitions

Organized alphabetically

Dominant Language(s) - A Dominant Language is the language or linguistic variant that holds the most power in a particular context or geographical area. It points to the language in which thinking is done and writing is recorded, and used when people gather to make decisions, regardless of the diversity of languages and forms of communication actually present.

Interpretation - Interpretation is the process of transmitting a spoken or signed message from a source language to a target language without adding, deleting, or changing the message, in real time.

Simultaneous Mode- Interpretation that occurs while the person who is being interpreted is actively communicating. Typically the interpreted message is being relayed a few seconds behind the original. For spoken interpretation, the use of simultaneous interpretation equipment is recommended.

Consecutive Mode- Interpretation that occurs in intervals and requires the speaker to pause so the interpreter can accurately relay the message while they are not speaking. Consecutive interpretation does not require special equipment.

Relay Interpretation- Simultaneous or consecutive interpretation that happens with three or more languages at the same time. For example, someone interprets from Swahili to English and someone else interprets the English message to Spanish. It should be noted that an interpreted message passing through several languages will take longer to arrive to the audiences receiving the message.

Unidirectional Interpretation - Interpretation that is only done from one language to another and not back and forth between each language. This can mean that one language group receives interpretation, but may not be interpreted for if given the chance to communicate in response. The use of unidirectional interpretation sets up a dynamic where one language commands more power, since users of the language for which interpretation is provided are put in the role of passive recipients of information. In most situations, this does not create a level linguistic playing-field. However, unidirectional interpretation can be used on a limited basis to “flip the script” and turn power dynamics upside down. For example, a community-based organization invites elected officials to a meeting and conducts the meeting in a nondominant language, so that elected officials must receive interpretation into the dominant language.

Multidirectional Interpretation - Interpretation that is done between two or more languages. Multidirectional simultaneous interpretation ensures that people who do not use all of the languages of a gathering

will receive interpretation and are also interpreted for. This creates a level playing-field for all languages present, and is a key language justice practice.

Language Access - Language Access describes efforts dedicated to ensuring that people who use non-dominant languages receive interpretation and translation services to access information and services. It is implemented as a mandate based on laws and policies, for example, Title VI of the US Civil Rights Act, the subsequent Lau vs Nichols Supreme Court decision, and similar laws and executive orders issued in the United States in recent decades. While Language Access is an essential way to recognize and enforce language rights, it does not necessarily require a transformative approach to making institutions more equitable and linguistically representative.

Language Justice - Language Justice is an ever-evolving framework and set of practices that ensure that people can lead, speak, and participate fully in movement building and, in their communities, regardless of the languages or linguistic variants they speak. Language Justice pairs interpretation, translation and relevant practices with an analysis of how power operates through language to create multilingual spaces and decenter English.¹ (Corbett, 2021).

Language Work - Language Work refers to the labor of decoding and encoding written, spoken and signed messages from one language to another, most often through informal or formal interpretation and translation practices.

Linguicism - Linguicism is oppression based on language. It includes “ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language.”² Like other forms of oppression, linguicism leads to advantages for some

¹ Corbett, Allison (2021). [“How Movements are Staying Multilingual Amid the Pandemic’s Shifting Conditions”](#) Waging Nonviolence.

² Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1988). Multilingualism and the education of minority children. In T. Skutnabb-Kangas & J. Cummins (Eds.), *Minority education: From shame to struggle* (pp. 9–44). Multilingual Matters.

(those who use the dominant language, which in most US contexts tends to be white, spoken English), and disadvantages for others (those who do not use the dominant language.) It can be practiced at the personal (internalized), interpersonal, or systemic level, and is most fully expressed in forms of language suppression that ultimately lead to language death.

Non-Dominant Language(s) - Non-Dominant Languages are those languages and variants that groups or institutions do not use or take into account when conceiving ideas, writing things down, and gathering to make important decisions. These languages could be those used by a minority of people or those used by most people or most accessible in a particular context or space. For example, in the US, the Spanish language may be a non-dominant language within the broadest geographical and cultural context, while in other regional contexts, it may function as a dominant language.

Source Language - Source Language refers to the original language of the message that will be translated or interpreted. For example, If interpreting from Spanish into Mixteco Alto, Spanish is the Source Language.

Target Language - Target Language refers to the language that a source message will be translated or interpreted into. For example, If interpreting from Spanish into Mixteco Alto, Mixteco Alto is the Target Language.

Translation - Translation is the process of transmitting a written message from a source language to a target language without adding, deleting, or changing the message.

Workflow Step (Translation, Revision, Spot-Check)- Each translation workflow can be broken down into at least three separate steps, often done as a team . The translation step is the most time consuming, and the translator should feel that the work is “complete” when they are done. The revision step is done by a second person, to check for errors in translation accuracy, grammar, etc. It should be a quick step and not be concerned with issues of voice or style. The final step is the fastest- a “spot check” is where a person checks the translation for accuracy at a pre-determined and regular interval to efficiently search for any

remaining issues (for example, the first sentence in every 3rd paragraph). The spot check can also be done after a document has gone through a design process, to look for any errors that were introduced at the design stage.

Turnaround Time - the total amount of time allotted to complete a full translation. Normally expressed as a number of days and hours. An organization may want to establish Standard and Rush Turnaround Times with different workflows and pay rates for each.



Establishing a foundation for your Language Justice Work

First Things First: Creating a Language Justice Vision Statement

What is a Vision Statement?

A vision is a shared idea, rooted in our values, of what we want to achieve.

“A vision serves not only as the destination but as the will or fuel to make it happen.”

— Black South Rising participant

Why a Language Justice Vision Statement?

The saying goes that we can't succeed in something if we can't see it for ourselves, which is why it's important to create a vision statement for your work as your organization begins its language justice journey. A vision creates a direction, a shared way forward where a path may not have been visible previously. A clearly articulated Language Justice vision can help you create clear goals and objectives that will ultimately help you implement, evaluate, and hone your own language justice best practices.

We would like to thank Bolivar Nieto, of Latino Commission on AIDS, for first sharing the vision statement framework and approach with us in 2021. We also refined the following guidelines through our capacity building work with Black South Rising and with Venita Ray, in particular

Guidelines

Once your team has received introductory training on language justice, but before choosing how, when, and where to implement strategies, have a discussion about the horizon you are trying to reach together. Language Justice may be important to us as individuals and in our world more generally, but what makes it fit into your organization? How will implementing language justice help you better serve your mission? We recommend starting with a brainstorm to answer these questions, and then assign a couple of people from your team (bonus if they like to write) to take these ideas and craft them into a paragraph. You will want to go through the drafts and reach consensus, but be careful! It is easy to get sidetracked wordsmithing the perfect statement, which ironically can impede the implementation that will make that very statement true.

When writing a vision statement...

1. Be Concise: Simple, easy to read and cut to the essentials
2. Be Clear: Focus on one primary goal
3. Have a Time Horizon: Define the time.
4. Make it Future-Oriented: It is about where your org plans to be. So, write as if it has already happened.

5. Be Stable: It can withstand the changes that come with the future.
6. Be Challenging: Neither easy nor unrealistic.
7. Be Abstract: capture the organization's interests and strategic direction.
8. Be Inspiring: Creates buy-in.

Sample Language Justice Vision Statement, from Black South Rising:

Black South Rising was founded on the principles of racial justice, equity, and liberation.

In the words of a dear friend of Black South Rising, Marco Castro-Boroquez, language justice is racial justice. Black South Rising will integrate language justice as a racial justice practice to dismantle barriers to access for linguistically marginalized communities by training and supporting leaders in the HIV movement. We commit to a practice of language justice in all that we do as embodied in our work with Colibri Academy and African Sisterhood Empowerment (ASHE) (2025). We commit to language justice as a liberatory practice of inclusiveness, authenticity, multicultural, multilingual, and love for all the people of the African diaspora. We embrace our immigrant brothers and sisters in all your wholeness to Black South Rising! We have a ways to go to achieve our vision, but we commit to always moving forward in our practice.

Language justice is not just about non-English translation/interpretation but is also about how we speak to each other, how we use and share information, body language, tone, verbal/nonverbal language, and what some have called “ebonics.”

We strive to speak the language of love so that others can speak too. BSR envisions the South as a place where the lived experiences of Black people of African descent are celebrated through education, self-discovery, healing, and resilience.

Where all shades of blackness, language, and cultures, steeped in our ancestries, are forever present in our people's sights, sounds, smells, and songs. We have achieved true solidarity, equity, inclusion, and integrated language justice practices into our cultural norms, organizations, policies, structures, staffing, work, and the American society we live in.

Sample Language Justice Vision Statement, from the Latino Commission on AIDS:

By 2026, using language justice principles, build the Commission's language inclusive practices aimed at empowering the voices in the Latinx community most impacted by health inequalities and systems, to communicate effectively; to promote free-from-judgement spaces; and to uplift our authentic selves and reach for health equity.



Building Buy-in for Your Vision

Once your primary Language Justice team has drafted a Language Justice Vision Statement, you should circulate it within your staff, leadership team, and any key member leaders or stakeholders for feedback. Emailing is easy to do, but might not be the most accessible medium for the people you most want to hear from, and it may not get you lots of interesting feedback. It might help to send an email or text a link to a recording of the statement, and then have a gathering where you go through questions together in person. Below is an example of how you could check for alignment and solicit input:

This statement should define what we hope Language Justice can help [your organization] accomplish. It should explain how Language Justice fits into our work and it should challenge us and push us forward rather than just explain what we currently do. It should be specific and inspirational.

★ Does this statement meet this goal? If not, why not?

- ★ What parts most resonate for you/What did you like the most?
- ★ What parts do you have questions about?
- ★ Is anything missing?
- ★ Do you feel challenged or inspired by this statement? If not, why not?

We recommend finding ways to keep this vision statement top of mind for your team(s). You could write it or print it out onto a poster and hang it in your office or meeting room. You could pin it to the top of your Language Justice Team's running notes. A good way to hold your organization accountable to your vision is to share the final version publicly and with the communities you serve. You could share it at a public-facing event; hang it in a public-facing area of your physical workspace, like a reception area; and/or post it on your website.

From experience, it may also help to have more than one version of the vision statement, based on the intended audiences—one can be funder-facing and use the kind of vocabulary found in that area, and another version could be community or staff facing, and written with the preferred vocabulary of those audiences in mind. You may wish to record an audio or signed version of it for greater reach. In all cases, you will want to translate the final statement into the primary languages used by your community.

Assessing How Your Organization is Doing with Language Justice

As you plan for Language Justice at your organization, it helps to have a sense of where you are starting. We've created a general Organizational Assessment to help you figure out where you're already practicing Language Justice, and where you have room for growth. This assessment is included in the [Appendix](#) of this toolkit.

We suggest that you use this tool collaboratively, so that you have the information you need to have the fullest picture possible of where you are starting, and to build a shared understanding of gaps and areas of growth. Remember: EVERY organization is on the path towards Language Justice practice, and NO organization has it all figured out. Be sure to give honest, accurate, and informed answers to the assessment, and come in with the expectation that there will be areas for growth.

For example: Your organization might convene its Language Justice Committee, or if you don't have one, you could gather a handful of people from across the organization, including people from different teams/departments and across different levels of seniority. Everyone could be prompted to fill out the assessment based on their experience individually, and then the group can discuss each question out loud to land on a final response. This allows multiple perspectives to shape a collective response to each question or category.

After filling out the assessment, the group could discuss key areas where they see the organization is doing well at practicing Language Justice, and the areas where they see the biggest need for a deepening of commitment. By prioritizing which gaps have the greatest impact on the organization, the group could then come up with an action plan to strategically address the issues they have identified.

We originally created this baseline assessment to help our partners evaluate themselves at the outset of our collaborations. We asked them to repeat it six months and a year afterward, so that they could measure their progress. Once

again, we don't expect organizations to check off every box at the end of six months, or even a year. We invite you to fill this out, and then revisit it frequently as you set collective goals for Language Justice implementation.



Resourcing a Multilingual Future

Financial resources often seem scarce within community organizations, nonprofits, and even large institutions. Experience has also taught us that organizations often cite costs and tight budgets as a barrier to practicing language justice. It remains true however, that we will never have the resources for what we don't prioritize. Budgets are political documents—meaning they reflect our values and our beliefs about how best to enact them. Budgets and resource planning are an essential part of planning to practice Language Justice.

Much of the labor that goes into effective multilingual work is overlooked or fades into the background. Additionally, many of the people who typically perform the labor of navigating language differences are women, femme people, and/or people of color, whose labor is already systematically undervalued in our society. Language Justice includes valuing and

compensating language workers for their labor, and the understanding that every effort to dismantle linguicism moves us closer towards Language Justice.

In this section you will find a few tools for budgeting for and cultivating the resources needed to practice Language Justice at an organizational level:

- ★ Guidelines for Requesting Language Justice Funding
- ★ Example of a Budget Request Justification
- ★ Scrappy Strategies for Resourcing Language Justice

Related Resources: In the [Appendix](#) you can find a Language Services Planning Tool, adapted from a resource created by Jazmín Rumbaut at the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

Guidelines for Requesting Funds for Language Justice

Whether you are requesting funds from your organization's leadership or seeking funds via a grant, there are a few strategies you can use to strengthen your case. Consider how you can add in language justice costs to any and all of your grant proposals moving forward to accomplish your language justice goals.

★ **Cite your legal obligations to provide language access as appropriate (compliance)**

- Highlight all applicable city, state, and federal mandates (for example, [Title VI](#) of the Civil Rights Act, Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, etc.)
- Highlight what is necessary to achieve compliance based on the laws and mandates that apply to your work

★ **Lay out your needs:**

- Emphasize the importance of language justice to achieving your mission — language justice is not an add-on; it should be

considered central to doing your work in an inclusive way and authentically engaging your target populations.

- Consider circumstantial justifications
 - Expansion of programs or language services that your department will provide
 - Emergent issues that affect specific language communities that your organization or program serves
- Use demographic data or feedback from focus groups to demonstrate the language needs of the communities you serve or aim to serve (the American Community Survey, a survey conducted by the US Census Bureau tracks language & can often be helpful in providing this data). Use tracking data to show the demonstrated need for language services
 - If you do not currently have mechanisms in place to track requests and provision of language services, doing so can help you make stronger requests in the future. In the meantime, use other existing data available to forecast the needs of your program/organization

★ **Make specific and clear line item allocations:**

- For all items, get quotes from multiple vendors; take the average to come up with a projected cost

★ **Remember that funding *Language Justice infrastructure* is just as important as funding the provision of language services**

- Tie your department's ability to provide services to key parts of language justice infrastructure such as staff positions, training, materials to make your members or clients aware of language services, etc. See the [Appendix](#) for an example of a Job Description for a Language Justice Coordinator.

Scrappy Strategies for Resourcing Language Justice

We know that resources are often scarce and an organization may be looking to practice Language Justice while it is still in the process of raising funds for it. We offer this section with this understanding, knowing that really important movement work isn't always funded, but still needs to be multilingual. We encourage ALL organizations to seek out ways to fund their Language Justice work and not rely on unpaid or discounted language work. In the long run, it is unsustainable for both movements/organizations and individuals to do this demanding work without fair compensation or adequate support, especially if we want to promote the work of interpreters and translators from directly impacted communities.

- ★ **Solidarity services:** Many social justice interpreters and translators will work for solidarity rates and offer sliding scale services. However, it is important to note that this will be offered based on your organization's budget and the type of work you are contracting. Do not expect free Language Justice work—you may be offered a 100% discount by interpreters and translators if nobody else is being paid as part of the effort.
- ★ **Bring your language work in-house:** In order to reduce the costs of hiring outside interpreters and translators, your organization may consider training your multilingual employees. Remember that multilingualism itself does not make someone a translator or interpreter; additional training is required. Your organization could decide to hire a [local language justice group](#) to provide a training for your organization so that your multilingual employees may take care of a lot of your day to day language services needs.

For translation, you could hire a consultant to work with a few of your bilingual employees to set up a translation workflow and create basic guidelines. If you choose to do this, know that you will also have to adjust employees' job descriptions and workloads to accommodate the extra language work they will be asked to perform, and consider offering a pay differential that rewards them for using their language skills on the job. Another recommended step is to use language

proficiency testing (for both the source and target languages!) to ensure your colleagues have the basic required language skills. Depending on the nature of your work you may still need to occasionally hire outside language workers—for example: instances when specialized language and experience (like medical or legal) is required, you are publishing a highly visible or high stakes document, or it's important that an interpreter for a given situation be a neutral third party.

- ★ **Volunteers:** If your organization is very grassroots, runs mostly on volunteers, and has very few paid staff, you could consider sponsoring a training for your multilingual volunteers to learn interpreting skills through [a local language justice group](#). For translation, you could hire a consultant to work with a few of your multilingual volunteers to set up a translation workflow and create basic guidelines. You could seek grant funding or hold a grassroots crowd-funding campaign to host these trainings. Even if you will be working with volunteers, we recommend finding a way to at least nominally recognize their efforts by covering transportation costs, providing them with meals, etc. You could also consider “passing the hat” at events, asking for participants to pitch in some money for the language team.

Budget Justification Example

AMP is a Dallas-based organization that provides non-clinical services specifically geared towards empowering people living with and impacted by HIV through education and navigation support of essential public services. We provide support related to healthcare, housing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs, education while breaking down the stigma that compounds those obstacles. Our primary areas of programming include AMP Up! a leadership development 8-week academy with additional mentorship between alumni and recent graduates. We also run a Navigator Program that provides people living and impacted by HIV vital support to navigate social services such as going to the doctor, housing support and applying for government aid of any kind. In order to effectively serve the immigrant community of Dallas, we know that we cannot work in only Spanish and

English — the languages we have been working up until now. AMP is requesting \$***** to develop some foundational infrastructure required to meet the emerging needs of Swahili and Arabic speakers in our community. In addition to allowing us to realize our mission more effectively, this new infrastructure will ensure that we can comply with Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act and Title VI of the Voting Rights Act of 1964, both of which mandate the provision of language services to prevent discrimination based on country of origin.

AMP has served the Dallas community since its founding and has prioritized offering programming in Spanish. However, we recognize that there is a growing population of immigrants particularly from places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan whose primary languages include Swahili and Arabic. We know that these particular populations often have limited access to healthcare and other essential services especially care relating to HIV prevention and treatment.

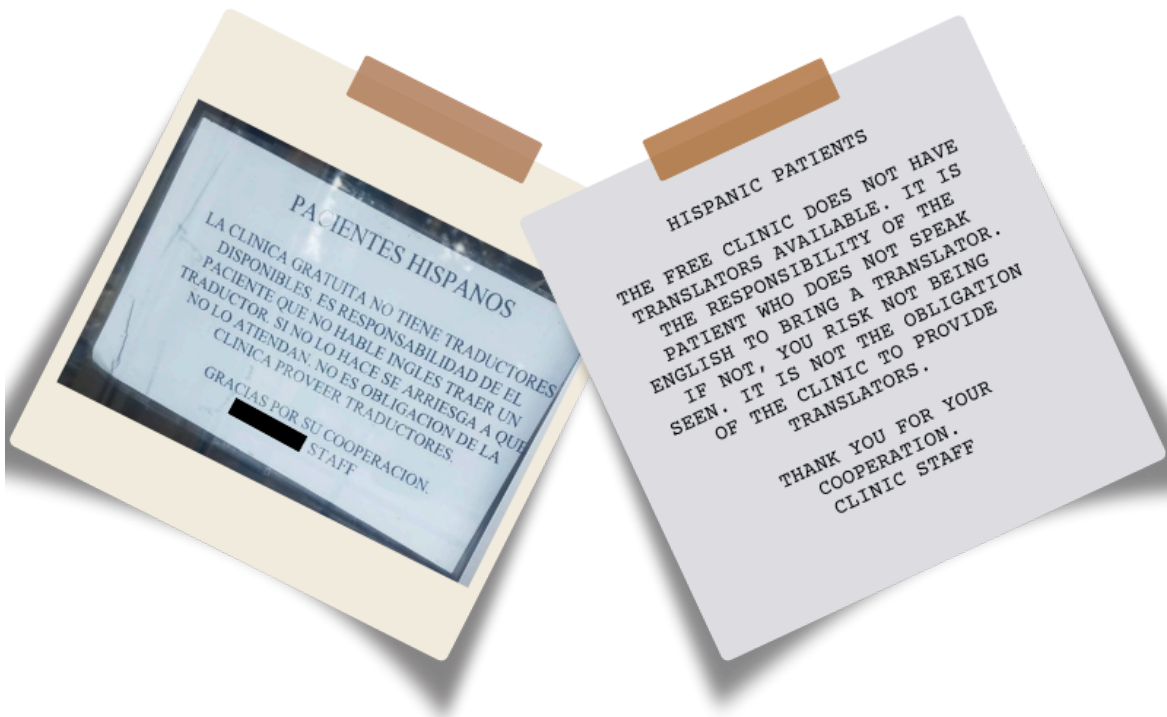
Last year, AMP staff conducted a Language Justice Assessment to better understand how we could serve the shifting immigrant populations. This assessment involved beginning to track the number of members from a local refugee center seeking support from our Navigator program who often listed African languages as their primary language (10%), as well as listening sessions with four local health-focused CBOs that work with migrant populations regarding the trends and needs they see. Based on this assessment, AMP has committed to expanding access to its programming in the two most prevalent languages identified - first, Swahili, followed by Arabic. This requires investing in our own infrastructure, and nurturing the pool of African interpreters available to serve AMP, and other local organizations.

In this expansion, AMP will use funds to execute the following over the next two years: 1) 2) Hire a Swahili<> English and Arabic <> English interpreters for our AMP Up! Academy, allowing us to train more community members in their own languages to become advocates and leaders in their communities; 3) Hire one Swahili and one Arabic speaking navigator who will provide vital support to our members seeking social services including healthcare in their languages; and 4) Purchase interpretation equipment for ongoing use. 5)

Hold an interpretation training program for bilingual speakers of Swahili and Arabic within our networks to increase the amount of interpreters available in our community.

A Note on Language Access Responsibilities

This section is inspired by [Language Justice: A Toolkit for Organizers](#), a resource created by Trilce Santana and Right to the City Alliance.



This is taken from an actual sign posted at a clinic at an anonymous location, shared with us by the Latino Commission on AIDS. Its message is both incorrect and illegal, though sadly not uncommon.

When we say “Language Access Responsibilities” we mean the services and infrastructure that many organizations are *legally responsible* for providing based on Language Access laws at the federal, state, and local level.

So what’s the difference between Language Access and Language Justice?

Language Access is a framework rooted in legislation and policy that protects language rights. These policies ensure that covered organizations and agencies can provide meaningful access to their programs, information, and services to everyone, regardless of the languages someone uses. These laws apply to many institutions such as government agencies, healthcare providers, courts, schools and more.

Many of the tools used to practice Language Access and Language Justice are the same—high quality translation and interpretation, hiring and compensation of multilingual staff, etc. However, to quote another Language Justice Toolkit we love: “While it is critical that folks who do not speak English be able to access all of the same services and structures that English speaking folks do, English still dominates in most of these settings. Simply having access will not fundamentally transform the services or structures themselves.”³ The Language Justice framework, which requires language access practices to succeed, goes further and uses tools like translation and interpretation to shift power and decenter dominant languages like English.

Language access is still essential, very challenging to do well, and (often) required by law. Language Access laws make sure that people at hospitals are offered interpreters, that surgical consent forms are translated, that people in court are entitled to interpretation, and that IEP plans at schools are available in different languages for students’ families.

Your organization in fact may already be subject to Language Access legislation. Which means that while you may be beginning your language justice journey and building out a robust commitment to the leadership of the most prevalent language groups in your community, you are **already responsible** for providing the legally mandated access laid out in federal, state, and local Language Access laws.

While it may still be common practice, something like requiring a client to bring their own interpreter is a violation of their Civil Rights under Title VI, and the individual seeking services would be entitled to file a formal complaint. As you move forward in Language Justice implementation, be sure that you and your team understand your Language Access obligations under the law, if applicable.

³Right to the City Alliance and Trilce Santana. [Language Justice: A Toolkit for Organizers](#).

What Language Access Legislation & Regulations Should I Be Aware of?

- ★ **Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act** prohibits *recipients of federal funding* from discriminating on the basis of “national origin,” which the Supreme Court has previously interpreted to include discrimination based on language. Title VI regulations also address situations where language services must be provided. You can find guidance and resources on complying with Title VI at [lep.gov](https://www.lep.gov).
- ★ **Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** require sign language interpreter services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, in addition to other accommodations.
- ★ **[Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act](#)** (hospitals, health clinics, health insurance issuers, state Medicaid agencies, community health centers, physician’s practices and home health care agencies; [see more here](#))⁴

Other federal mandates that require language access in certain contexts include, but are not limited to:

- ★ [Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968](#) (law enforcement, courts)
- ★ [Food Stamp Act](#) (state and local agencies administering SNAP benefits)
- ★ [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (state and local agencies administering employment related benefits)
- ★ [Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act](#) (election materials)
- ★ [Fair Housing Act](#) (state and local agencies ensuring fair housing)
- ★ [Equal Educational Opportunities Act \(1974\)](#) (schools/educational context; [see more here](#))

⁴ Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (2025). [“Know Your Rights: Executive Order Threatens Access to Federal Programs.”](#)

★ [Stafford Act](#) (FEMA disaster relief; [see more here](#))⁵

⁵ Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (2025). ["Know Your Rights: Executive Order Threatens Access to Federal Programs."](#)



Putting Language Justice Into Practice

Tools for Combatting Linguicism

What do we mean by tools for combatting linguicism? Much like combatting other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, ableism etc., we need a systematic approach to understand, reveal, and address the different ways this form of oppression shows up in our society and institutions. Doing so requires more than a surface-level understanding of oppression as merely an interpersonal matter. Knowing that it runs throughout our cultures and institutions will help us avoid merely checking off access boxes or simply providing interpretation services or translated materials in a few limited arenas. The communities you serve should feel like the spaces and services you provide were created with them in mind.

In this section, we have created two categories of practices that your organization can implement towards dismantling linguicism and lay the

groundwork towards a Language Justice future. First, we have practical tools you can begin to implement when your knowledge and resources are sufficient. The second section focuses on what ongoing commitment, experimentation and creativity can look like with the understanding that this is a longer-term commitment requiring buy-in and leadership from many people within the organization.

Language Services

Interpretation (for all!)

- ★ Interpretation is not only about converting words, it's about being understood and understanding others, and creating opportunities for true dialogue to thrive. When only non-dominant language users receive interpretation, they remain at a disadvantage. While they will be able to receive information in their language, they won't be able to take up space, contribute, and be understood by other participants who use the dominant language. When we prioritize interpretation for all, regardless of which language they use, it creates a container where dialogue flows in all directions. Successful multidirectional interpretation dismantles the linguistic barriers that have historically silenced non-dominant language users, and gives dominant language users the opportunity to build relationships with and learn from people they don't get the chance to communicate with on a regular basis. One of our favorite moments as Language Justice interpreters is when a participant has an "ah-ha" moment, grabs one of us and says "follow me; I have been wanting to talk with this person for ages, and I can finally do it now that you're here."

Translation

- ★ When organizing and working with multilingual communities, it's important to ensure that everyone can engage with the information you are sharing. Translation is not only a technical task, but also an act that can break down power dynamics by giving access to key information. For example, translating outreach materials is just as important as providing interpretation at an event. Without both,

non-dominant language users may miss key details or opportunities to engage. Multidirectional translation is an even deeper cut into Language Justice practice: it means people are invited to think and compose in non-dominant languages first, only THEN translating that content back into the dominant language.

Live captioning

- ★ Live captioning services ensure that everyone, regardless of hearing ability or language fluency, can more fully participate in a spoken exchange of information by reading along in real-time. Effective, human-driven captioning can be done in the dominant language of a space to support participants who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as people who are newer to learning that language. It can also be provided in another language as a way to extend access for users of non-dominant languages. Live captioning might not be an option for all users of all languages, depending on the degree of participant literacy and familiarity with the written word among different language groups and alphabets.

Style guides & bilingual glossaries

- ★ Style guides and bilingual glossaries are foundational to clear, inclusive, and impactful communication. Glossaries create access to language that helps audiences and language workers who work with your organization to familiarize themselves with key terms important to your movement or organization. Multilingual glossaries, especially, help create consistency in your messaging when working with different interpreters/translators. Style guides equip communicators with techniques to communicate with diverse audiences, maintaining consistency and affirming core values in each message. Different projects may require different style guides depending on target audiences. Translation style guides also set standards for translators to ensure uniformity in translation. Refer to [the section on Style Guides and Glossaries](#) for more information and how to create these resources.

Ongoing Commitment, Experimentation & Creativity

Create a Language Justice Vision statement

- ★ Creating a Language Justice Vision for your organization is an important exercise to collectively imagine what Language Justice within your organization can look, sound and feel like. As Donella Meadows put it in the article “Chicken Little, Cassandra and the Real Wolf: So Many Ways to Think About the Future” the Vision should be done “so clearly and compellingly that it summons up the energy, agreement, sympathy, political will, creativity, resources or whatever to make that vision happen.” Without a Vision for Language Justice Vision, your organizational staff may struggle to implement language practices in a strategic and impactful way.

Create a multilingual outreach plan

- ★ Event interpretation and translation alone will not magically bring people who use those languages into your spaces. An outreach plan that considers particular community needs and interests is key. For example, does this community use the social media platforms traditionally used in your outreach efforts? Don't assume that your issue is important enough on its own merits to bring people to your space. Have a plan to reach out in the languages of the communities you want to engage, to hold a gathering that is culturally relevant and sensitive to those groups, and to do adequate follow-up. We have often seen great efforts made to get people into a room just once, but without a plan or the resources needed to do it again. The trust that is built can easily be eroded by this short-sightedness, no matter how good the original intention is.

Multilingual staff

- ★ Staff who speak to us in our languages can make a world of a difference in our level of comfort and belonging in a space. When and if possible, hire staff that reflect the communities you want to work with, especially client-facing staff who often are the first to connect with community members.

Comprehensive training (for everyone!)

- ★ We recommend that your organization hold comprehensive trainings on Language Justice and other related topics such as gender inclusion and pronouns, disability justice, cultural competencies, stigmatizing language etc. Doing so will help staff members and other stakeholders create buy-in to your vision and help ensure that everyone has a shared understanding of your organization's values, policies, and commitments. Consider accessing trainings from [a local language justice group](#).

Decenter the dominant language

- ★ Look for different ways you can avoid defaulting to the dominant language in your programming. For example, consider facilitating certain workshops or events in a non-dominant language and offering interpretation into the dominant language (only if interpretation for all cannot be achieved). We call this “flipping the script”. Not only does this give the non-dominant language users of your community an example of what it can look like to be centered, but it also allows people who are used to communicating in the dominant language an opportunity to experience what it’s like to rely on interpretation.

Budgets

- ★ Budgets are political documents that reflect our values. Review budgets periodically to ensure that your intended investment in language justice mirrors your budget line items on things like interpretation, translation, outreach efforts in languages other than English, staffing, trainings etc. As you get closer to living out your Language Justice Vision, your financial investment should grow as well. Refer to the [Resourcing a Multilingual Future](#) section of this toolkit for more information on how to budget for Language Justice.

Intentional space for cultural and linguistic exchange

- ★ Make it a habit to create a welcoming environment by playing music in other languages or in a language that most closely aligns with your

community. This can also include sharing art, poetry, videos, works of art that engages participants and says “this was made with you in mind”. Find opportunities to share their language like taking time in your check-in to share specific phrases in each other’s languages/dialects. Rita McDaniel, an HIV activist from the South, often talks about making HIV spaces approachable by using design and colors that are not cold and clinical, but rather inviting and that celebrate the beauty of their communities.

Internal and External Language Justice Advocacy

- ★ Language Justice relies on partnerships to grow and thrive. Think about how we can take leadership within our organizations and beyond. For example, how are you ensuring that Language Justice is being practiced in coalition spaces or other organizations/institutions that your members frequent? Taking on this work outside of your organization takes organizational commitment and courage, to call out the lack of access and language injustice happening around you.



Interpretation Overview

See the [Shared Definitions](#) section for a full definition of interpretation.

There are two modes of interpretation, and they are used for different purposes:

Consecutive Interpretation

- ★ Consecutive interpreters listen to what one person is saying/signing, and convey the message into another language after the person communicating has paused. Typically, the person communicating will pause after each complete thought, to give the interpreter time to accurately deliver the message.
- ★ Most-commonly used for: individual service encounters, such as in a medical or social services setting (for example, medical interpreters are all trained in consecutive interpretation).

Notes:

- ★ No additional equipment is needed for consecutive interpretation, however whenever consecutive interpretation is used, you should expect to take twice the normal time allotted because everything is said twice (once in the source language and again in the target language).
- ★ Some organizations decide to work exclusively with consecutive interpretation because the primary communities they work with have a preference for it. Consecutive may be easier for some people with disabilities that affect information processing or for languages where concepts must be explained often in place of using single words or phrases when no direct translation exists.

Simultaneous Interpretation

- ★ Spoken simultaneous interpretation is best and most frequently delivered using specialized interpretation equipment. This equipment is specialized and can be costly to replace. It includes a transmitter, which the interpreter speaks into, and receivers, which are used for listening to interpretation. Many platforms for virtual meetings, such as Zoom, have an interpretation function integrated into their applications.
- ★ Most commonly used for conferences, group conversations or meetings.
- ★ A variant of the simultaneous mode is called chuchotage. Chuchotage is a form of simultaneous interpretation in which the interpreter whispers the interpretation to a person or group of people. From a Language Justice perspective, this is discouraged except in rare circumstances. This form of interpretation is very hard on the interpreter's voice and doesn't allow for an equitable setup in which non-dominant language speakers and dominant language speakers alike can receive the same form of interpretation. This is especially true when a group of non-dominant language speakers is separated out from the main group to receive whispered interpretation—creating linguistic segregation and compromising the quality of equal participation.

Notes

Because of the heavy mental labor required for simultaneous interpretation, interpreters should always work in pairs when in this mode. Studies have shown that after even just 20-30 minutes of nonstop simultaneous interpretation, regardless of the skill of the interpreter, the accuracy of interpretation begins to decrease.⁶ Some interpreters will make exceptions if the event lasts 45 minutes or less, but many prefer to always work with a partner to ensure accuracy of interpretation.

Sight Translation

- ★ Sight Translation is the spoken or signed rendering of a written message, from a source language into a target language, in real time.⁷

Notes

- ★ Sight translation should only involve short documents. Long documents should be fully translated ahead of time. In general *all* written materials should be shared with the interpreters in advance of the event.

Integrating Interpretation into Your Organization's Work

You've decided that your organization will start providing interpretation—now what?

Here are a few **key steps** to get started:

- ★ Based on your baseline assessment, (see [Appendix](#)) identify which services you want to offer, to whom and when. Consider getting help from Wave or a Language Justice practitioner at this stage—knowing what to do is the first step—seasoned practitioners can help you determine the “how.”
- ★ Identify which staff are responsible for managing interpretation at your organization. (Find a sample of an Interpretation Workflow [Appendix](#).)
- ★ Identify the interpreters or organization you will work with.

⁶ <https://hajit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ProteusWinter1997.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.thecommunityinterpreter.com/interpreting-modes>

- ★ Train staff on how to offer and access interpretation and any organizational policies connected to your commitment to providing those services.
- ★ Make sure that the communities you serve and employees know that language services are available to them. (

Finding local interpretation providers

- ★ It may be easiest for you to find a group that offers a full range of interpretation services either locally, or remotely, depending on your needs.
- ★ There are dozens of Language Justice collectives, co-ops, social enterprise businesses and hybrid non-profits in the United States. To locate a partner in your area, you can consult [this directory](#) of Language Justice groups.
 - Notes:
 - You may also consider contacting groups on the list to ask for additional recommendations if you don't see a group in your area or the group(s) in your area don't offer the languages you are looking for.
 - As a new client, many groups will be able to offer you an onboarding or orientation session. If you need support with training or understanding how to best work with interpretation, ask if they provide that service.
 - Ask for/give feedback - interpreters or interpretation providers can offer valuable insights on how you can better support a bilingual or multilingual space. Likewise, be sure to give feedback to your interpreting providers, especially if you have a way to get direct feedback from end users (via survey, for example).

Building your own interpreter roster

If you have a bit more capacity for managing interpretation internally, we recommend building up a pool of local interpreters that you can work with directly on an ongoing basis.

★ **Benefits:**

- You can ensure the interpreters you work with are familiar with your organization's work and the communities it serves.
- A consistent team of interpreters can better advise you and provide feedback on the effectiveness of your language justice efforts.
- A reliable team of interpreters will have a stronger relationship with you and your participants, and will become more fluent in your unique combination of jargon, accents, and workplace culture. They will be more open to receiving constructive feedback, and more able to implement improvements over time.

★ **Important elements to have in place**

- A designated staff member to maintain relationships with your team of interpreters & coordinate their provision of services
- Uniform contracts for all interpreters

Ability to pay all of the interpreters separately as contractors vs one agency that handles payments to interpreters (capacity within your finance/contracting department)

Using Multilingual Staff as Interpreters

Do not assume staff members have comfort or capacity to take on interpretation. Interpretation is a skill that requires a deep understanding of both the source language and target language. If you would like to have staff time go towards interpretation work, keep the following in mind:

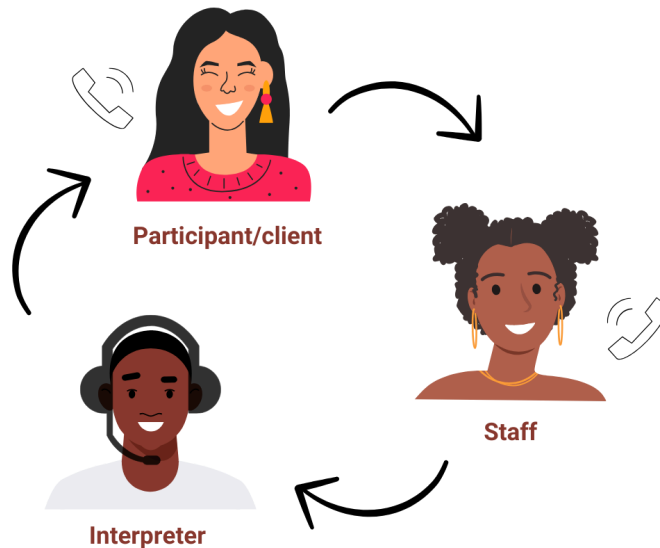
- ★ Ensure that interpretation duties are a part of their job description.
- ★ Ensure that the staff member(s) have time to take on interpretation tasks (i.e. relief from their other duties).
- ★ Compensate staff members for their time/work (make sure that interpreting is part of their 'work time').
- ★ Use language proficiency testing (for both the source and target languages) to ensure your colleagues have the basic required language skills to interpret and/or provide services in other languages.
- ★ Invest in relevant trainings for professional development (this is important especially if interpretation is not something the staff member(s) do often).

Make sure to include Language Justice Planning from the beginning

- Whenever you are planning for multilingual gatherings, dedicate meeting time for event organizers to plan how to best include users of non-dominant languages.
 - Always invite staff responsible for Language Justice work to event planning meetings so that the appropriate time, resources, and consideration can be invested in supporting interpretation.
 - When creating the budget for events, be sure to include funding for interpretation and translation costs, printing in multiple languages, etc.

- Recruit interpreters in a timely manner. See our [Interpretation Workflow](#) in the Appendix for one example for how to plan ahead for event interpretation
- Make room at the beginning of the event to give a language justice announcement (See the [Appendix](#) for an example)
- Ensure language justice is addressed in event registration (have registration forms and surveys in multiple languages, and include a question around language needs)
- Be sure to include questions about language-related experiences in event feedback forms

Using Over the Phone Interpretation (OPI) and/or Video Remote Interpretation (VRI)



Over the phone interpreters or remote interpreters who interpret over video and appear on a tablet screen are commonly used as a strategy for meeting language needs at large, public-facing institutions. There are some limitations to using this kind of interpretation, but it is often an important tool for an organization to have in its toolbox. Here are some tips on the best uses of and strategies for getting the most benefit out of these kinds of services. OPI/VRI should not be considered a replacement for in-person interpreters and efforts should be made to recruit and work with skilled local interpreters who match the language community that your organization serves.

How does it work?

- ★ First, your organization establishes a contract with a company that provides OPI or VRI services, then is typically billed based on usage.
- ★ Then, when a staff member needs to reach an interpreter they follow instructions by calling a number or accessing an app on a tablet.
- ★ The staff member is asked to provide basic account information and then requests the language they need.
- ★ Then they are connected to an interpreter. For more frequently used languages you may be connected instantaneously. For languages of lesser diffusion, you may have a longer wait before you are connected with an interpreter.
- ★ Then, after briefly sharing with the interpreter the context and relevant details of what they will interpret, the staff member can begin speaking directly to the client/participant. This will be done consecutively, so the service provider or staff member must remember to pause often.
- ★ Note: OPI can be used for in-person [one-on-one] interactions, or can be used for phone calls.

Benefits

- ★ Quick access to a wide variety of languages - it ensures that you can most likely get an interpreter for anyone who may come into contact with your organization.
- ★ On demand services mean you can meet unforeseen needs and don't need to schedule service ahead of time.

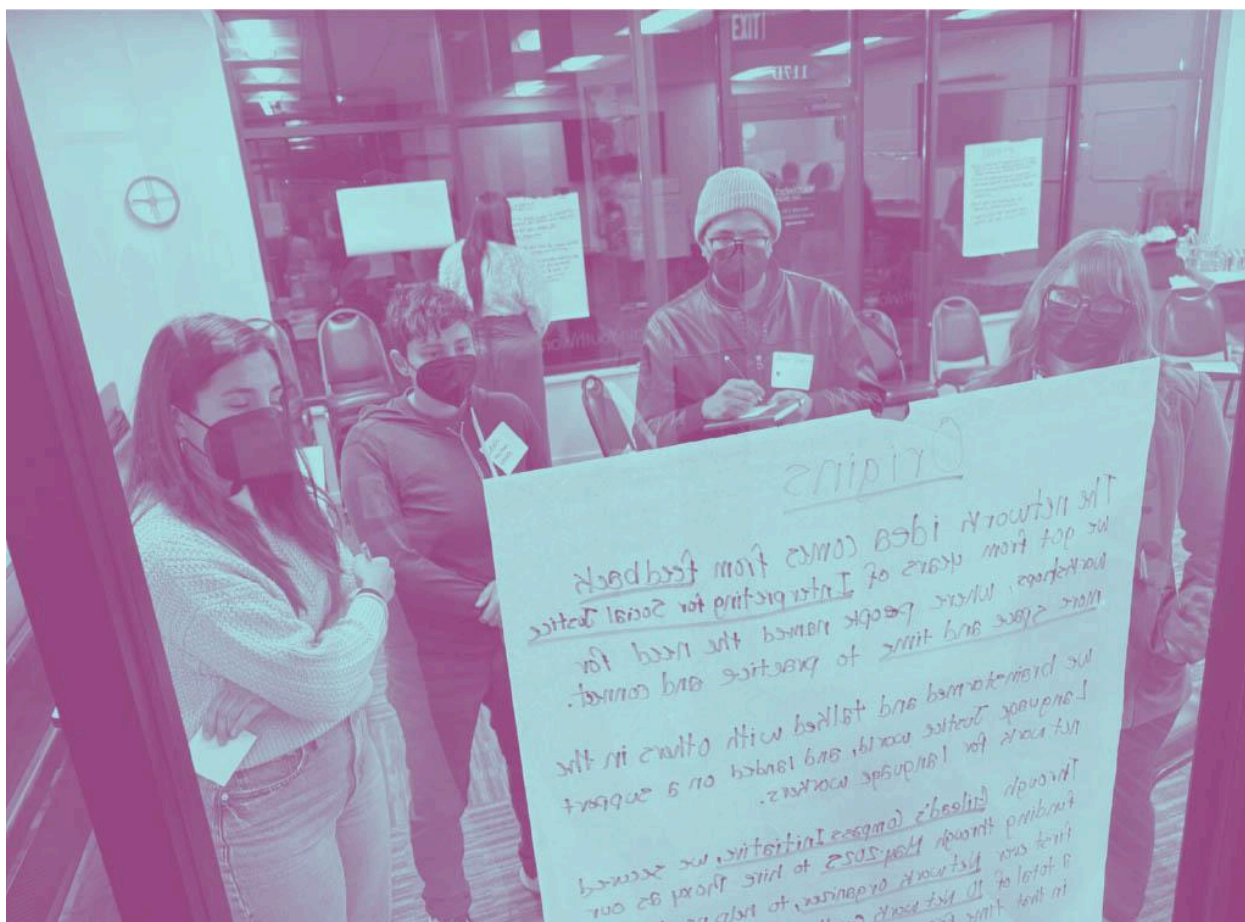
Challenges

- ★ The quality of interpreters provided by these services varies a lot. Many large language services providers reportedly pay low rates and the level of training required or provided of the interpreters employed is inconsistent.
- ★ You have no control over the interpreter you are assigned, which means you may or may not get someone who is well-equipped for the specific conversation you will have, or who understands the context, vocabulary and sensitivities of the work your organization does.
- ★ All parties generally communicate best when in-person and full body language and context clues can be taken in. Some high-stakes, sensitive, or complex conversations are best to have with in-person interpretation.
- ★ You must have good wireless connection and audio connection in order for OPI/VRI to be effective.

How to Get the Most Out of OPI/VRI:

- ★ Always brief the interpreter before diving into the conversation - what we call a "pre-session." Let them know any specific things that will be discussed and any prior information that is needed to understand or approach this conversation. This helps them use appropriate vocabulary, understand sensitive issues that may come up or even the local context for the conversation.

- ★ Use a “teach-back” strategy to make sure that the person you are communicating with has understood the conversation. Ask them to repeat or summarize key points of the conversation - this will give you a chance to correct any misunderstandings that have occurred.
- ★ Make sure that your technology setup is optimal so that all parties are able to hear each other clearly and not likely to lose connection during the conversation.
- ★ Train staff frequently on how and when to access your OPI/VRI services and have instructions clearly visible, especially to frontline staff.
- ★ When using OPI/VRI for indigenous languages from Latin America, make sure to verify that there is a match between the interpreter and the client/participant. For example, Mixtec from one region is not understandable to a speaker of Mixtec from another region. Communication will not be effective if there isn't a match.



Translation Overview

See [Shared Definitions](#) for a full definition of translation.

Integrating Translation into Your Organization's Work

You've decided that your organization needs to start translating written content. This can be a major undertaking, especially if there isn't clarity around which documents to prioritize. It's okay if you want to start off by prioritizing the translation of content that's more relevant to your target audience, even if it's not a lot. It does not have to be all or nothing!

Here are a few **key steps** to get started:

- ★ Based on your baseline assessment (see Appendix), identify which content you want to translate and for which audience. Consider getting

help from Wave or a Language Justice practitioner at this stage—knowing what to do is the first step—seasoned practitioners can help you determine the “how.”

- ★ Identify which staff members are responsible for managing translation at your organization (must be knowledgeable and have access to internal translation resources such as Style Guides & Glossaries so they can provide that to the translations).
- ★ Identify the translators or organization you will work with.
- ★ Create a translation workflow (see example in the [Appendix](#)) that fits the capacity and needs of your organization.
- ★ Train staff on how to request and manage translated materials and any organizational policies connected to your commitment to providing translated content.
- ★ Make sure that the communities you serve and employees know that content in their language is available to them (don't make it hard to find!).

Create a Style Guide - A style guide will help your organization have consistency in the target languages, which can help you maintain the integrity of messaging across all documents. Style guides can also help resolve some questions that may come up during the translation process. There are aspects of a target language that are not present in the source language that should be considered when translating (for example, honorifics and degrees of formality, navigating grammatical gender or gender neutrality) . Whatever the case may be, your organization should be aware of these nuances and make decisions accordingly. Refer to the [Style Guides and Glossaries section](#) of this Toolkit to find information on the steps to creating a style guide. There is also a style guide template in the [Appendix](#) that you can use to create your own.

Create Glossaries - Glossaries serve as a guide to the translation of key terms. These can be terms that often repeat in the organization's messaging or could be specific medical or legal terms that you want to make sure are

translated consistently throughout all documents. For example, a single word in the source language may have many translations in the target language, and the correct choice depends on the context. Refer to the [Style Guides and Glossaries section](#) of this Toolkit to find information on the steps to suggestions on where to begin, plus a template for you to fill out. Remember, glossaries are not definitive and there are many valid opinions on what terms are best to use in any given context. Use your best and most informed judgment when making glossary choices, and be ready to debate!

Building your own team of translators

If you have a bit more capacity for managing translation internally, we recommend building up a roster of translators that you can work with directly on an ongoing basis.

★ Benefits:

- You can ensure that the translators you choose to work with are familiar with your organization's work and the communities it serves.
- Sticking with a team of translators will ultimately help streamline your workflow process.
- A team of translators could be helpful for particularly large projects where workload must be divided to meet a specific deadline.
- Go-to translators can also serve as revisors for projects that should go undergo a more thorough review process.
- A consistent team of translators can better advise you and provide feedback on the effectiveness of your Language Justice efforts, and will also be more open to feedback.

★ Important elements to have in place

- A designated staff member to maintain relationships with your team of translator(s) & coordinate their services.

- Uniform contracts for all of the translators.
- Ability to pay all of translators separately as contractors vs one agency that handles payments (capacity within your finance/contracting department).
- Understanding of translators' rates, including rush-rates/fees, turnaround times, and ability to translate certain files (such as PDFs, web content, and subtitles which may require specific software).

Make sure to include Language Justice Planning into all of your workflows

- Whenever you are planning for multilingual gatherings, dedicate meeting time to discuss the need to translate materials, especially any outreach materials. The person handling Translation Project Management at your organization should have regular opportunities to consult with program teams or other relevant internal teams to help plan for upcoming translation needs and advise on the creation of content aimed at different language groups.

Using Multilingual Staff as Translators

Do not assume staff members have comfort or capacity to take on written translation work. Not all multilingual people can translate and not all people who interpret are translators. Translation is a skill that requires a deep understanding of both the source language and target language. If you would like to have staff time go towards translation work, keep the following in mind:

- ★ Ensure that translation is part of their job description.
- ★ Ensure that the staff member(s) have time to take on translation tasks (i.e. relief from their other duties and tasks).

- ★ Compensate staff members for their time/work (make sure that translating is part of their ‘work time’).
- ★ Use language proficiency testing (for both the source and target languages) to ensure your colleagues have the basic required language skills.
- ★ Invest in relevant translation trainings for professional development (this is important especially if translation is not something the staff member(s) do often).
- ★ Ensure that the translation goes through a revision process (see translation workflow in the appendix), and share that feedback with the translator.
- ★ If you do work with an outside translator you could have a staff member be a revisor (if this is the case, ensure that it is also discussed and consented upon).

Tips for Creating Multilingual Content and Working With Translators

- ★ All content shared with translators must be in the editable file format - this means the file you share must treat the written word as text to be manipulated (not as an image). For example, if you make a graphic that has text for translation, don't send a PDF file. You should send the content for translation in an unformatted and editable format along with the graphic for reference.
- ★ Some ways of creating emphasis in English or other languages, like bolding or underlining text, are not applicable to other languages. One way to get around this is by playing with the size of text as a way of creating emphasis.
- ★ Languages that are written Right to Left can occasionally get flipped when inserted by an inexperienced designer. Languages with alphabets that are not as well represented in font packs (Nepali, for instance), can also undergo unintentional conversion to linguistically

similar alphabets and become unreadable. It's best to always have a native speaker review any finalized content to ensure this hasn't happened.

- ★ Remember that some languages use more words or characters than others to express the same concept. If you create a one-pager in English with no room in the margins, it may turn into a two-pager in your target language.

A few notes on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for translating/machine translation (MT)

- ★ AI translation is not available with equal quality across languages. It is much more accurate for languages with large training sets (English, Spanish, and Chinese, for example).
- ★ AI is often the easiest and most cost effective way to guarantee at least some measure of access to written information. Google widgets embedded in pages are common — but Google itself warns of the potential inaccuracies of its translations, and also presents privacy concerns as all content they use for translation is stored as training data. Never assume that automatic translation without careful human review equals access to accurate information. MT should be considered as a tool to be used in conjunction with human translation efforts, not a complete solution on its own.
- ★ Be aware of the security risks associated with using AI. AI uses algorithms and machine learning to generate answers, which means that the data that people input is stored and can be used and found. We strongly recommend the following precautions:
 - Do not input sensitive and identifiable information into an AI/MT platform to avoid tracking.
 - Do not input entire documents with easily identifiable information into the platform as they can be leaked.

- Do break up the Source File into segments if running it through automated translation.
- ★ There are serious concerns about the amount of energy that AI consumes. Additionally, the use of AI relies on knowledge produced by humans to train its algorithms, making it extractive and susceptible to reproducing human bias. Finally, translation is real work, and human language workers should be involved and fairly compensated whenever possible.

Creating Style Guides & Glossaries

- ★ Use this [link](#) to view and make your own copy of your own style guide and glossaries.

The creation of a Style Guide and Glossaries should be a joint effort between key organizational staff, community members and at least one language worker. We recommend including people who speak the languages represented in the Style Guide and Glossaries (if any), stakeholders or key community members, and at least one experienced language worker.

Recommendations for Style Guide & Glossary Team

- ★ Meet with language worker(s) to understand what the Style Guide and Glossary are for, and the different parts of each.
- ★ Language worker(s) will ask team members to make a call on particular aspects of style, based on the values of the organization and the language/dialect of the target audiences. These decisions may not be easy, and will require research and principled debate. (For example, the use of gender/gender neutral for particular audiences).
- ★ Language worker(s) and staff identify terms to include in the glossary. Terms can include acronyms, titles, roles, programs, services and other key words or phrases that come up often.
- ★ Language worker(s) provide translations for terms based on their best professional opinion and relevant research, and then meet with the team to debate and approve the final choice for each. Remember that glossaries evolve over time, just as language does, and it's ok to make a call on certain terms in the interest of having language to work with for the time being.
- ★ Language worker(s) finalize Style Guide & Glossaries and present to the team. The team should also decide how often to revisit the guide and glossaries.

We recommend that you keep your Style Guide and Glossaries in the same place—you can use a spreadsheet or a google doc and use the tabs to divide up the sections.

Below, we walk you through the tabs of the Style Guide & Glossary Template

Tab: Cover Page

Below you can see a cover page of a spreadsheet containing a table of contents for the use of the Style Guide & Glossary.

[TITLE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION]	
Please use this document to guide a translation, interpretation, and [TARGET LANGUAGE (TL)] language content creation. This document should be maintained and periodically updated by organizational staff members. Below is a table of contents with key information and guidance for each tab.	
Tab	Description
Style Guide	Key communication guidelines for EN>[TL] translation or [TL] language content creation. This tab is not opened to public edits.
Acronyms	A list of frequently used acronyms by organization staff and community. Organization's language partners are encouraged to add any common acronyms to this sheet.
Titles, Staff & Roles	[TL] translations for any organizational titles, roles & staff. Language workers are expected to use the terms listed in this tab and not other translations for the purposes of maintaining consistency and uniformity. This sheet is locked to public edits.
Programs, Services & Events	[TL] translations for any organizational related events, services and programming. Language workers are expected to use the terms listed in this tab and not other translations to maintain consistency and uniformity across all documents. This sheet is locked to public edits.
Specific Identities Key to Org	A nonexhaustive list of key organizational terms and other identity terms. Language workers are asked to take note of any additional guidelines for the specific use of a term. Organization's language partners are encouraged to add any corresponding terms to this glossary.

Note: Style guides are created to 1) guide the creation of original content in the dominant or nondominant languages of your organization, 2) be a guide to translate content into your target language from your source language in a consistent manner that best reflects the language of the target reader.

Tab: Style Guide

A blank style guide with important considerations for each section.

Official Title:		
Translated Title:		
Website (EN):		
Website (TL):		
Target Audience(s):		

Language Variance	Regional/geographic language variants of target audience. Consider where their language variant is from and how it is influenced by their current location.
Register (Formality)	What kind of register do you want to establish for your target audience(s) and when/ for what documents? Consider that the target language may have a variety of registers when referring to someone.
Informal & familiar	Content if any that will use a(n) informal/familiar register. Consider the target culture. Some cultures may use informal/familiar register for youth and/or for people that they are more familiar with.
Formal & ceremonial	Content if any that will use a formal/ceremonial register. Consider the target culture. Some cultures may prefer to use a formal register for people whom the organization does not have a close relationship or for older adults. Formal register may also be needed for official statements or to honor or recognize someone through official means.

Non-Binary Language	Policy for using non-binary language in languages other than English. Consider does the target language have a gendered language. If so, are there strategies that can be used to make the language directly or indirectly non-binary? Detail the ways you will uphold non-binary language in the target language to ensure consistency throughout all translated and content in languages other than English.
Numbers	Numerical formats in other languages may vary, however if your organization is based in the United States consider the value of sticking to an EN numerical format to avoid confusion. <i>For example, 2,000 as opposed to 2.000 in traditional Spanish. Likewise percentages will be used in EN as 5.6% as opposed to 5,6% in Spanish.</i>
Dates	The numerical format of dates to be used in all content. The numerical format of dates may also vary, many countries will use the format of DD/MM/YY instead what is typically used in the U.S. MM/DD/YY. Decide what the numerical format of the date will be OR if you want to stick with fully writing out dates.

Punctuation/ Capitalization	Guidelines for punctuation and capitalization in the languages other than English. Consider if there are any capitalization/punctuation guidelines that may defer from the standard use in the target language. *Please reference the 'Titles, Roles & Programs' tab for more information on specific translations.
Titles, Headlines & Creative Works	
Roles & Positions	
Titles of Publications & Speeches	
Languages and Nationalities	
Racial & Ethnic Identities	Organizational political stance on capitalizing certain letters in racial or ethnic identities.
Proper Names	Organizational political stance on capitalizing certain letters in proper names noting that some people may choose to not capitalize any letters of their name for political reasons. <i>For example, bell hooks.</i>
Acronyms	Guidelines for using and translating acronyms. Consider if an acronym is not already listed in the glossary what is the general guideline for creating or using an existing acronym in the target language. *Reference the 'Acronyms' tab for a list of acronyms used by organization and their translations if there is one.

Tab: Acronyms

An example of an acronym glossary. Be sure to research if an acronym exists in common use. If so, it is recommended that you use that instead of creating a new acronym or term.

EXAMPLE OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH TERMS				
EN Full Name	EN Acronym/ Abbreviation	SP Full Name	SP Acronym/ Abbreviation	Notes, Sources & Additional Guidelines
Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS	MIPA	Mayor Participación de las Personas que Viven con el VIH	MPPVS	https://gnpplus.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Spanish4.pdf

Tab: Titles, Staff & Roles

An example of a titles and roles glossary. Notice that some terms may change depending on context. Be sure to discuss with your team and language worker to create a consensus on when to use what term. This same format can be applied to glossary tabs for 'Programs, Services & Events' and 'Key Identities'.

EXAMPLE OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH TERMS			
EN	SP	Notes & Additional Guidelines	Sources
advocate	defensore; promotore	depending on context: for legislative advocate use "defensore" for someone who is advocating for services or specific issues use "promotore"	



Multilingual Websites

Consider your needs & resources:

- ★ When deciding to invest in creating or expanding multilingual access to your website, ask whether audiences who use languages other than English will likely engage with your organization through the website - this will help you decide how to prioritize the translation of digital material.
- ★ A full translation and ongoing maintenance of a multilingual website may be too cost and labor intensive for your organization, especially if you are just beginning your Language Justice journey. There may also be other, more effective ways of making sure that non-dominant language users are able to meaningfully engage with content that organization creates.

- ★ Maintaining a dynamic (frequently changing/updated) multilingual website requires resources and coordination—whenever content is updated, it must go through the translation workflow to make sure that content in other languages is also updated at the same time. With sufficient infrastructure and budget this can be done with specialized translation management systems, such as Smartling, Weglot, or Motion Point—which provide an efficient way to use human translations, with options for machine translation when waiting for updates. All must be managed by a linguist or experienced Translation Project Manager familiar with these tools. Here's [an example of a translated website](#) created and maintained using one of these translation management systems (you can access translations of the site using the selection tool at the top right of the page).

Prioritize what is most important & adjust the design of your website for multilingual access

- ★ Consider translating static content first—content that is evergreen on your website and will not change much—like your mission statement, about page, program descriptions, etc.
- ★ Make it very easy for people to find multilingual content on your website—if you have translated info accessible in certain parts of your website, but you have to click through multiple layers of English information to get there, it will be harder to find.
- ★ Think about the kinds of materials/programs/events you would like for people who use languages other than English to engage with or attend, and having that information translated and available in a centralized and easily findable location. Use a prominent language selector to ensure that anyone who visits the homepage can easily tell there is content in non-English languages available.
- ★ Translate messages into your primary target languages about how to get more information or get in contact with your organization using

their primary language, if that is available. Additionally, you can post translated messages so that people can request interpretation for your events, etc. Remember to make sure they are easily findable from the landing page.

- ★ Use visuals on your website to make it clear that you affirm and value multiple languages and they are welcome as part of your organization—for example, a banner with welcome in multiple languages. Use images either on your website or as part of other culturally relevant materials that affirms your target audiences.
- ★ Be aware of design complications that can come up when translating website materials. For example, it's very likely that the target language translation will be longer and take up more space than the English-language content.

Examples | For examples of these principles in action, check out these websites that feature multilingual content:

- ★ [California Rural Legal Assistance](#)
- ★ [Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles](#)

Note: For guidance on using AI or Machine Translation on websites, please refer to the [Translation Overview](#) section of this Toolkit.



Conclusion

We hope this Toolkit has served you and your organization along your journey towards Language Justice. We are dreaming of future editions of this Toolkit and look forward to sharing our learning as we go. We'd love to hear how it's going for you. Please reach out with questions, comments, and feedback. Be sure to check out our [website](#) for more ways to collaborate. You can also contact us if you'd like to book us to train your organization on using this toolkit hello@wavelanguagehub.org

Onward!

Appendix

- A. [Sample Language Justice Announcements](#)
- B. [Language Services Budgeting Tool](#)
- C. [Organizational Assessment](#)
- D. [Glossary & Style Guide Template](#)
- E. [Interpretation Workflow](#)
- F. [Translation Workflow](#)
- G. [Interpretation Equipment Checklist and Policy](#)
- H. [Sample Job Description - Director of Language Justice](#)

Additional resources can be found on Wave's [Language Justice Resources Page](#).