

Communities Creating Healthy Environments (CCHE)

# Language Justice

## TOOLKIT



Multilingual Strategies  
for Community Organizing

# Communities Creating Healthy Environments

# Language Justice Toolkit

## Multilingual Strategies for Community Organizing

### Background and Acknowledgments

The term “language justice” is a powerful way to describe individuals’ fundamental right to have their voices heard. This *Language Justice Toolkit* is the product of the collective work of individuals and organizations who share a commitment to “multilingual spaces” – that is, spaces intentionally created to incorporate two or more languages and cultures in all aspects of the group process. Everyone who contributed to the Toolkit did so from the conviction that multilingual spaces are essential for building strong movements for racial and social justice. Much of the learning that informed this toolkit came from a Language Justice Learning Circle, organized in fall of 2011 by the Praxis Project, Highlander Research and Education Center, Colectivo Flatlander and Berkeley Media Study Group.

This toolkit has been developed with the support of the Praxis Project and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of Communities Creating Healthy Environments. Communities Creating Healthy Environments works to improve access to healthy food and safe places to play in communities of color. This effort, led by the Praxis Project, is a national capacity-building initiative to support diverse, community-based organizations and indigenous groups with proven track records in developing and organizing for effective, culturally competent policy initiatives that address the root causes of childhood obesity at the local level.

### Acknowledgements

This content was written and gathered by Pancho Arguelles of Colectivo Flatlander, Susan Williams and Adina Hemley-Bronstein of Highlander Research and Education Center, with help and support by Ditra Edwards of the Praxis Project, Tomas Aguilar from Colectivo Flatlander and Andrea Arias Soto. Elandria Williams contributed the reflection on African Americans and language justice; Pamela Mejia and the Berkeley Media Studies Group helped with the Communication section.

We want to acknowledge the broad community of language justice practitioners who have guided and inspired this process. We have been particularly encouraged by the work of CCE grantees Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Committee against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAV), Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER), and WeAct (We Act for Environmental Justice) among many others who are building the values language justice into their organizing.

We acknowledge the many others who have supported the process and who continue to contribute to the thinking, doing, and documentation that inform our own work and this toolkit. We want to thank Alice Johnson, Roberto Tijerina, Ada Volkmer, and many others in the U.S. and around the world who have been fighting for language justice over many years.



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The Language Justice Toolkit is a resource for organizers, popular educators, community leaders and activists, and anyone who is committed to building movements where people can communicate across languages.

## What is Language Justice?

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For us, language justice is about building and sustaining multilingual spaces in our organizations and social movements so that everyone's voice can be heard both as an individual and as part of a diversity of communities and cultures. Valuing language justice means recognizing the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle language barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice.

No single or static definition for language justice exists. We expect that our understanding of the concept of language justice and its implications for movement-building will continue to change and deepen as the movement grows.

Here are a few elements key to our current definition of language justice:

Language justice is rooted in a **history of resistance** by communities and peoples whose voices and cultures have been suppressed for generations. Language justice is an alternative to that historical pattern of disenfranchisement and oppression. It affirms the fundamental rights of individuals and communities to language, culture, self-expression, and equal participation.

Language justice is a **process of organizing and advocating** to win proactive policies that will help achieve equity and have meaningful impacts across race and language.

Language justice offers a **vision of society** that honors language and culture as fundamental human rights, and which does not settle for providing more people with access to the status quo, but rather alters institutions to provide space for full democratic participation.

When we ground our work in the values and practices of language justice, we bring our messages and work to more people, and we bring more people into our work. Language justice helps us build power by opening doors to new members, leaders, and forms of leadership. When we as organization members, community leaders, organizers, and allies can express ourselves in the language in which we feel most articulate and powerful, we can communicate with greater precision, and we can relate to one another in deeper, more democratic and equitable ways. When movements make room for multiple languages and voices, we all benefit from a diversity of experiences, perspectives, and wisdom.



## The Toolkit: A Living Process

This toolkit is not a traditional document. It is a collaborative process based upon concrete practices. It seeks to promote constant learning and improvement in the complex intersection of community organizing and language justice.

In order to make the “vision” of language justice a reality we need concrete tools and methods for building multilingual capacity in our organizations and movements. The *Language Justice Toolkit* is a collection of specific, practical strategies for organizations and individuals who are committed to building powerful multilingual spaces in their own workplaces and communities.

We hope that you will use the toolkit – in whole or in part – for whatever your own next steps might be in building spaces for language justice.

You might notice that some sections offer more questions and framing concepts than concrete tools. We plan to post an electronic version of the toolkit on the CCHE, Praxis Project and Highlander websites as part of our learning community. We invite you to visit the toolkit online to add your thoughts and comments and to share experiences and tools from your own work. With your contributions, our toolkit can continue to grow and adapt as our communities and movements expand.



# Interpretation

Interpretation is a crucial skill in any language justice space, and this skill must be cultivated and nurtured. This section of the toolkit is designed to help organizations find interpreters and provide them with training and support. While trainings and even licensing programs exist for medical and legal interpretation, a different set of skills and strategies are necessary for interpreting in community organizing and social justice settings.

## Definitions and Concepts

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(Borrowed from Alice Johnson’s handbook “Interpretation and Translation: Power Tools for Sharing Power in Grassroots Leadership Development.” See the *Resources* section, page 42, of the toolkit for more info on this publication.)

*Interpretation:* The oral process of rendering a spoken message from one language into another.

*Consecutive Interpretation:* The speaker speaks a few sentences and then pauses to allow the interpreter to repeat them in the other language. The speaker and interpreter take turns talking, so consecutive interpretation doubles the time required for information to be shared.

This method requires interpreters with good memory retention, but does not require any special audio equipment.

*Simultaneous Interpretation:* The interpreter interprets the speaker’s message at the same time as the speaker is talking. Special audio transmitter equipment is required, and the interpreters need advanced listening-talking simultaneity skills.

## Working with Interpreters

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### Finding Interpreters and Creating a “Pool”

Schools, hospitals, and legal settings (i.e., courthouses) are good places to contact when seeking interpreters. People who grew up in immigrant families and served as the family interpreter can also be good contacts.

Ideally, interpreters will be from the communities we work with. This is an important way to build language justice skills and knowledge that will stay in the community and build its power.

Although funds may not be available at first, your organization should aim to pay interpreters or build in staff positions with language justice responsibility. Providing compensation is an important

way to support interpreters so they can continue doing this work and so your organization has a reliable pool of interpreters to call upon. As you are working to train and support interpreters, there can be ways to trade training and support for actual interpretation help.

### What Makes a Good Interpreter?

As you find interpreters, it is good to see them (and hear them) in action. Having a way to test the skills of interpreters and also get references helps you find the people best suited to your needs. A good way is to have one of your best interpreters (someone familiar with your organization) test a person’s skills.

An essential quality of good interpretation practice is fidelity to what was said.

Interpreters need to avoid making choices for the speaker or listener; although we always choose words, our choice should be based upon what will better convey the meaning of what was said, as opposed to what we think the speaker should say or the listener should hear.

A good interpreter creates a space where people speak to each other, rather than to the interpreter. Interpreters should work to have the speakers looking at one another, not talking to the interpreter.

We have learned that bad interpretation can be worse than no interpretation. Not only does the lack of accuracy create confusion, but bad interpretation can be experienced as a lack of respect to people's language, ideas, and identity, and it can undermine the values of language justice by failing to facilitate true participation, communication, and inclusion.

Some interpreters may be more

experienced or skilled at either consecutive or simultaneous interpretation. Although there is considerable overlap, these two kinds of interpretation require different kinds of skills; for example floating attention and capacity to speak fast and enunciate are key for simultaneous interpretation, while great short-term memory and quick note-taking are more relevant for successive interpretation.

Here are some useful qualities for interpreters:

- ❖ Focus and concentration
- ❖ Ability to talk fast and enunciate
- ❖ Good short term memory (called a Cache) and recall (strengthen with memory exercises)
- ❖ Ability to convey emotions and emphases (in addition to words) of person talking
- ❖ Remains composed despite



pressure or stress

- ❖ Ability to make decisions quickly
- ❖ Commitment to learning: willing to practice skills, increase vocabulary
- ❖ Humility! A big ego gets in the way of high-quality, effective interpretation
- ❖ Ability to work with others
- ❖ Reliability and flexibility
- ❖ Respect for different kinds of discourses (that is, different ways people express themselves)
- ❖ Good class, race, and gender analysis in relation to their role as interpreters, and allies in general, in a community organizing context
- ❖ Since interpreters are better at interpreting into their own native language than into a language learned later in life, it helps to have pairs of interpreters who are native speakers of the two languages involved who can support each other.

### **Training, Mentoring, and Practice: Ensuring Quality**

It is essential to provide training, mentoring, and opportunities to interpret for skill-building. Providing opportunities for people to practice skills both on their own and also at events can help to strengthen people's abilities and

provide confidence.

By offering interpreter trainings, organizations can find and evaluate the skill levels of potential interpreters. Trainings also help individuals determine their own ability and identify areas to improve. Every interpreter needs regular practice and guidance to improve and do their job well. And it's important to remember that people who are bilingual do not necessarily have the skillset required for quality interpretation!

Through a collaborative effort of many interpreters and facilitators, the Highlander Center has developed a curriculum (**What Did They Say? Interpreting for Social Justice: An Introductory Curriculum**) on how to train interpreters and provide practice for them. This is available for groups working to promote language justice on the Highlander Center website, [www.highlandercenter.org](http://www.highlandercenter.org).

### **Solicit Feedback and Show Appreciation!**

Interpretation is a skill to support and encourage! Following up with interpreters after events can also provide good opportunities for offering feedback to them about their work, and also to get feedback for ways the organization can improve its planning and support for language justice work.

## **Equipment**

Simultaneous interpretation is best done with interpretation equipment. In our experience Williams Sound or Babelbox equipment have worked very well. Many groups who have equipment are willing to lend or rent their equipment and Babelbox provides rentals

through their website.

It is very important to take good care of the equipment, to have systems for maintaining, testing and tracking equipment. Testing the equipment before an event is important.

*See the Interpretation Equipment Section, page 8, for more details about buying, renting and maintaining equipment.*

## Organizational Support

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Successful multilingual spaces are not created by the interpreters alone. Organizations need to support the work at every stage.

- ❖ **START OUTREACH EARLY.** Considering language early on (i.e., while planning an event) leaves time to reach out to potential interpreters.
- ❖ **PROVIDE MATERIALS AHEAD OF TIME.** Sharing materials about your event with interpreters ahead of time allows them to review the topics and vocabulary relevant to the event and become acquainted with your organization's mission and culture.
- ❖ **BUILD INTERPRETATION INTO THE AGENDA.** Remember, interpretation takes time (and consecutive interpretation doubles the amount of time needed to share information), so be sure to build this time into your schedule, as well as the time needed for planning, distributing

equipment, providing an introduction for interpretation, etc. There is an Introduction to Interpretation following this section, to use at the beginning of a meeting or session to ground everyone in creating a space for interpretation to proceed smoothly.

- ❖ **GIVE INTERPRETERS A BREAK.** Schedule designated breaks for interpreters throughout the day. Avoid long presentations over lunch that leaves interpreters no time to rest.
- ❖ **SET UP "INTERPRETERS' STATIONS"** where water, coffee, and snacks are made available.
- ❖ **CHECK IN AND PROVIDE SUPPORT.** Make sure other staff support interpreters by helping to test and distribute equipment, introduce the interpretation/interpreters to the community, and orient interpreters to the space (where sessions are located, where to find food and water, etc.).

## Resources

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**Bridge: A Popular Education Resource for Immigrant and Refugee Community Organizers** p. 22-35 Eunice Hyunhye Cho, Francisco Arguelles Paz y Puente, Miriam Ching Toon Louie, Sash Khokha, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, [www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org)

**Interpretation and Translation: Power Tools for Sharing Power in Grassroots Leadership Development** Alice Johnson, El Centro Hispano, written for Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, 2002  
Free download: <http://www.mrbf.org/>

[resource.aspx?catId=1#Interpretation\\_and\\_Translation](http://www.mrbf.org/resource.aspx?catId=1#Interpretation_and_Translation)

**What Did They Say? Interpreting for Social Justice: An introductory Curriculum** Roberto Tijerina, Highlander Research and Education Center, 2009, Contact: [swilliams@highlandercenter.org](mailto:swilliams@highlandercenter.org)

Additionally look for medical and legal interpreters and associations in your community or state. They have a lot of experience and tools that can help people to improve their interpretation skills.

# A Quick Introduction to Interpretation

*The following quick orientation to interpreting should take less than 2 minutes to do with the group, and should be done right at the very beginning. It is only sample text and can be changed to fit the needs of the group.*

“We want to let y’all know that we are interpreting between Spanish and English today. This is because we have speakers of these two languages with us (at least these two!) and we want to encourage everyone to feel confident and at ease to participate using the words that are most meaningful to them.

We believe that the language we use is intimately connected with who we are, our thoughts, our emotions, our dreams, our cultures, our passions, our politics... everything. We are interpreting these sessions in English and Spanish to help create an inclusive space where each of us may feel free to bring our whole selves into the room.

To make the interpreting as inclusive as possible, we want to ask folks to please keep the following in mind:

1. **Speak at a moderate pace**, not too fast or too slow.
2. **Speak in a loud voice** so you can be heard clear across the room.
3. **Speak directly to your fellow participants**; no need to look at the interpreters.
4. **One person talks at a time**; interpreters can’t choose which one to interpret for.
5. For bilingual folks, please **feel free to switch languages** as much as you like, **but please not within the same sentence.** (*This is meant to be humorous!*)
6. For those using equipment: if there is any **trouble with the equipment** or its batteries, please come over and **get a different set** as soon as you notice the problem (please don’t suffer in silence!).
7. **When you yourself are talking**, it is often helpful to **pull your earphones off or turn down the volume** so the interpreter’s voice in your ear won’t distract you.

8. The language in which the conversation is occurring can switch at any moment, and we want folks to feel at ease to speak in whichever language they want. If the discussion flows into a language that you don’t need interpreted, it is fine to turn the volume down, but please **keep the earphones close by and ready** should the language suddenly switch again. This is so we don’t make anyone feel “on the spot” if they switch languages and cause us to go scrambling for our headphones and lose momentum because we weren’t ready for it.
9. At the end of the day and during breaks, please turn off the equipment to **save the batteries.**

If folks start talking too fast or too quietly, we like to use some hand signals to let folks know to slow down or speak up. Usually we do this:



*(demonstrate a hand signal for “SLOW DOWN”)*



*(demonstrate a hand signal for “SPEAK UP”)*

Are these hand signals that are ok with y’all to use?

*(If not, ask the group to agree on their own hand signals)*

If the interpreter starts making these hand signals and the speaker doesn’t notice, but other folks in the group see it, can we agree as a group to help out by doing the hand signal, too?

*(hopefully they say ‘Yes’)*

Are there any questions?” *(Answer, thank everyone, and continue with workshop)*

# Interpretation Equipment

Simultaneous interpretation (when interpretation and speech occur at the same time) requires special audio equipment. This section of the toolkit provides information and tips on buying, renting, and using simultaneous interpretation equipment.

Here is a tip to remember - **take care of your equipment. Pay attention to maintenance, testing, and upkeep of the equipment.** Faulty equipment can cause frustration and anxiety and lead to low-quality interpretation. We have definitely made this mistake and seen it happen to others, so we want to save you the pain of this experience!

## Equipment Options

### 1. Williams Sound Equipment, <http://www.williamssound.com>

Williams Sound Equipment has been an excellent source of reliable and sturdy equipment for interpretation. The system consists of a small transmitter with a microphone that sends the interpretation to receivers with earphones.

The cost of this equipment is high, but discounts of up to 25% are available if you buy in bulk. For the average purchase of 50 headsets and receivers, two transmitters, and two microphones, the listed price is around \$10,000. However, certain distributors of the equipment will negotiate with discounts up to 30%. Also look to see if you have relationships with any local companies that distribute Williams Sound. You can find distributors by entering the model number in an Internet search engine.

Tips for buying Williams Sound Equipment:

- ❖ Have your non-profit status papers/tax exemption forms ready.
- ❖ Know what kind of equipment you are looking for and what quantity you want.

- ❖ Set a budget and stay within it (find other groups who are interested in splitting the cost and sharing equipment).
- ❖ Ask about return policies and warranty policies, and get this in writing! Also, ask for the specific model for the items being purchased.
- ❖ Ask for a discount! They won't offer one unless you ask specifically. There are a few types of discounts we've requested and received:
  - Non-profit discounts (typically 5%)
  - Cancelling of shipping fees
  - Bulk discounts (up to 10%)

These companies have been helpful with our purchases:

- ❖ Barinas Translation Consultants  
800 Hope Tree, San Antonio, TX  
78260-6814  
[www.barinas.com](http://www.barinas.com)  
[info@barinas.com](mailto:info@barinas.com)  
1-(800)-909-0093
- ❖ Lexicon-Global  
[www.lexiconusa.com](http://www.lexiconusa.com)  
[sales@Lexicon-Global.com](mailto:sales@Lexicon-Global.com)  
1-(800)-792-5020

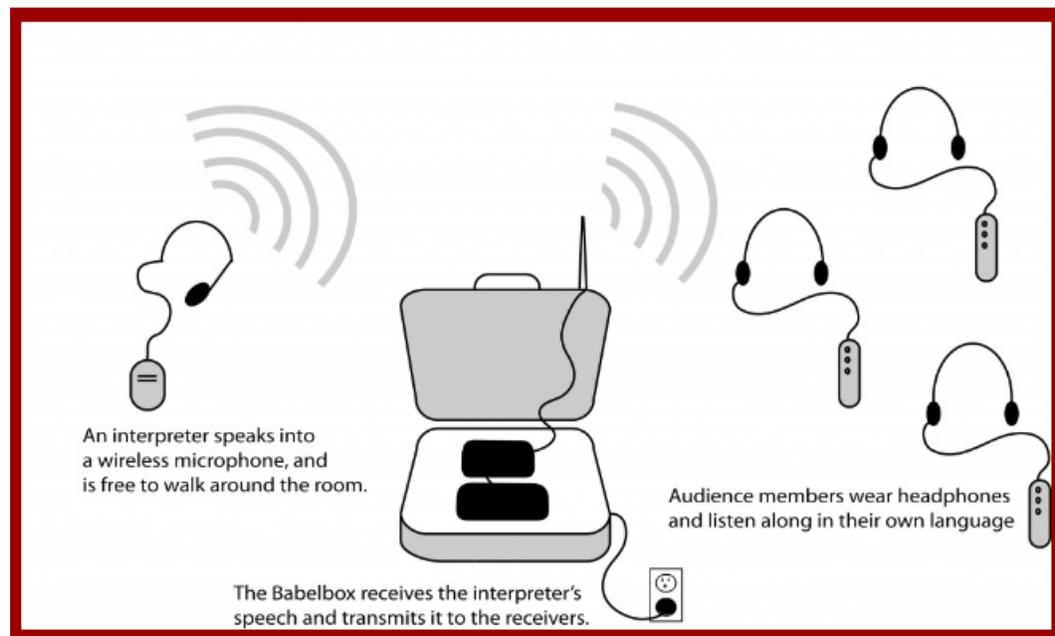
**2. Babelbox,**  
[www.thebabelbox.com](http://www.thebabelbox.com)

Babelbox equipment was used with great success during the 2010 U.S. Social Forum in Detroit, and it has improved in recent years. Babelbox is produced by a cooperative of engineers and interpreters in Philadelphia, PA, and the equipment can be bought or rented. The primary advantage of Babelbox is that, because it uses a

regular FM channel, the headsets/receivers are much less expensive (\$15) than Williams Sound receivers.

An initial set of Babelbox equipment (10 receivers) is \$1600 for non-profits and \$1850 for other groups. Equipment may also be rented for \$150/day and \$3.00 for each headset-receiver.

This graphic from the Babelbox website illustrates their equipment:



## Comparing Prices

### Price Comparison Chart

Company	Item	Model Number	Prices (from internet website search June 2012)	Notes:
<b>WILLIAMS SOUND</b>	Transmitter	T36 Bodypack Transmitter	\$343	Interpreter will transmit to audience
	Microphone	MIC 100 Headset Microphone	\$89.95	
	Receiver	R35-8 Eight channel Receiver	\$159.00	Participants will wear the receiver
	Earpieces	HED 021 Executive Folding headsets	\$15.50	It is also possible to use other earphones (i.e. Radioshack - \$10), but need to test. There are also various designs, and it is good to have various types for fitting various ears.
	Case	CCS-03-035	\$137.00	
<b>BABELBOX</b>	Transmitter, microphone, case and ten receivers		\$1650 non-profits \$1800 others	
	Receivers and earpieces		\$15.00	
	<b>Babelbox rentals also available</b>		\$1	

### Sharing Your Equipment/ Tracking Your Equipment

The privilege of owning interpretation equipment is an opportunity to build your community's language capacity and practice. Sharing and/or renting your equipment to other groups can be a great idea, but only if you have good systems for lending and returning

equipment and tracking it along the way.

One important thing to do when lending equipment is to make sure that there's at least one person attending the event who understands how to use the equipment. Have them help you test all the equipment if you can when you lend it, so they can see how it works and you ensure that it is working properly.

On the next pages are two useful documents. One is a sample rental form from the Center for Participatory Change in North Carolina. It is very helpful to:

- ❖ Use a form like this to ensure a record of what equipment was borrowed or rented and who was responsible.
- ❖ Make sure that the group understands the cost for the equipment (which can be a sliding scale) but also the responsibility to replace any lost equipment.

Also there is a log form for keeping track of the use of individual receivers at events. Receivers should be numbered and then recorded on the log form as they are borrowed. Getting a contact number for the borrower helps you to track down missing equipment. When they are returned, the entry can be marked.

**Having a good simultaneous interpretation experience requires a good equipment experience!**



# Equipment Rental Agreement



## Center for Participatory Change

Supporting grassroots efforts across Western North Carolina  
*Apoyando los esfuerzos de grupos populares en el oeste de Carolina del Norte*

PO Box 9238  
 Asheville, NC 28815

Phone: 828-232-2049  
 Fax: 828- 254-6378

Email: info@cpwnc.org  
 Website: www.cpwnc.org

### Agreement for Rental of Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- I have received information on how to properly utilize CPC's interpretation equipment and have been given at total of \_\_\_ receivers, \_\_\_ headphones, \_\_\_ transmitters and \_\_\_ microphones, all in good working conditions.
- I agree to fill out the Simultaneous Interpretation events log located in the equipment box.
- I agree to make a donation to CPC to help cover the usage and batteries costs. (Please give donation to CPC staff or place on the envelop located in the equipment box).
- I agree to return the equipment to CPC's office or a CPC staff in the same condition as it was given to me within 24 hours of the rental day. (A \$5/day fee will be charged when the equipment is not returned to CPC's office or staff within 24 hours of usage)
- I agree to reimburse CPC for any lost or damaged equipment.

I will use this equipment on \_\_\_\_\_

Fee (See sliding scale below): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of **Organization** Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of **Organization** Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

CPC Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Sliding Scale Fee	Daily Fee	Annual Fee
<i>Budget under \$50,000</i>	<i>\$10</i>	<i>\$100</i>
<i>Budget between \$50,000 and \$150,000</i>	<i>\$20</i>	<i>\$200</i>
<i>Budget over \$150,000</i>	<i>\$50</i>	<i>\$350</i>
<i>For-profit organizations and Businesses</i>	<i>\$90</i>	<i>-</i>

#### Cost of replacing equipment:

Receivers \$ 125 / each  
 Headphones \$ 12 / each

Microphones \$100 / each  
 Transmitters \$350 / each

# Equipment Log/ Registro de Equipo de Interpretación

Event/Evento \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Rec.#	Name/Nombre	Organización/ Organization	Contact Info/Datos
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# Translation

**Translation** is the process of rendering a written document (printed or in digital form) from one language into another. This section of the toolkit offers concrete steps for establishing effective translation processes and systems in our organizations.

## Why translate?

Translation deepens our organizing efforts and makes our work more lasting. While the impact of interpretation ceases as soon as speaking and listening end, the translation of written language allows conversations to continue outside of the physical, spoken multilingual spaces we create. When we translate materials, participants can take them away from meetings and events and share them with their families and communities. Through translation, we can move from simply holding an event to furthering a process. We know how important this transition is when we are aiming to build power and build a movement.

At its core, translation is about access to information as a human right. Particularly given the strong xenophobic and nativist sentiments present in our current political moment, translation is a critical part of protecting individuals' and communities' basic civil and human rights.

## Outreach

When we are working in a multilingual community we invest in translating our flyers, invitations, campaign materials, etc. *Out-reach can become in-reach*, by sharing information and communicating with our constituency in their primary language (the language of their choice) we are showing respect. In addition, our invitation to join with us and





participate in our activities is, literally, more meaningful. Having outreach materials translated to the languages our membership speaks and reads offers the opportunity for our members and allies to do outreach with their families, neighbors and friends.

We know how important good outreach is for base building, membership recruitment and retention; and since one of our central sources of power is our power in numbers, translation becomes a really wise investment of our resources. This is also a reason to remember how important the good quality translation is: a poorly translated outreach flyer can have the exact opposite effect we are looking for; when you see an invitation to an event that doesn't take your language seriously you can question if they take your participation seriously.

### **Leadership development**

Translating our internal organizational documents as well as organizing and policy materials and political education resources opens the door for a whole new level of participation for our members and staff whose first language is other than English. More and better participation allows for different people to engage in decision-making conversations, political analysis and strategy discussions with a different level of power. Leadership is about empowerment, the person, the collective and the community; organizing in multilingual settings requires translation as a tool for empowerment. More and more grassroots organizations have their reports, bylaws and all important documents written or translated to the different languages spoken by their board members; this takes the participation of grassroots members to a new level. Taking translation seriously helps avoid tokenism or just a ritual inclusion for

legitimization purposes, a depressing game that seems to say: We can't really understand you, and you can't really understand us but we will pretend you were really part of the decision process.

### **Policy campaigns**

In order to win a policy campaign we need to be able to communicate our goals, agenda and messages to our allies and the general public; even more important, we need to be able to communicate with our base, leaders and strategic allies. If we are doing real and effective grassroots organizing this will mean that we need to be able to translate our campaign materials and messages to the languages our communities speak and, or better, we will be able to produce some materials and messages directly on those languages and then later translate them into English.

For our policy campaigns to be rooted and empowered with the moral authority that comes from the stories of our communities we need to be able to capture and read these stories in their original languages. For our events and mobilizations to show our power in terms of numbers we need to be able to do outreach that can become in-reach when it is done in the languages our communities speak. We know the pace of a policy campaign can be hectic and in many occasions we don't control it; this is another reason to develop the organizational capacity to constantly produce and translate political education and policy resources in the languages that are relevant to our work. Having our team of staff and volunteer translators involved in our campaign is also an excellent way to advance in their leadership development and political education, all this requires a long-term commitment to develop multilingual capacity.

# Developing and Strengthening Your Organization's Translation Capacity

## Conduct a Needs-Assessment

To build our organizations' translation capacity, we must begin by assessing the needs of our communities. The first step is to assess the languages that are spoken and read by your organization's constituencies, allies, and key decision-makers.

There are various ways to conduct this assessment:

- ❖ Design a survey or questionnaire.
- ❖ Conduct interviews with organization staff and community members. Consider including questions about language skills/needs in your initial interview and orientation for new members and volunteers.
- ❖ Refer to census data.
- ❖ Address translation during planning and evaluation meetings. Have staff from different areas of your organization talk about their work from a language justice perspective focusing on identifying skills, resources and needs. Identify areas of integration; this can even lead to having a formal multilingual team.
- ❖ Address translation during budget and strategic planning meetings. Having a good assessment will inform these conversations, and at the same time knowing what to expect in terms of resource allocation will help you when planning for translation, interpretation and other language justice activities.
- ❖ Assess continuously and collectively, and put your process in writing so you can share your findings with allies and decision-makers.



- ❖ Remember: the assessment itself is part of the ongoing effort to build understanding and commitment to language justice among organization staff. The more that people reflect on translation, the more they will appreciate the relevant challenges and opportunities, and the more willing they will be to dedicate time and resources to developing your organizational translation capacity.

### **Build on Existing Processes and Share Ideas**

If your organization provides direct services (i.e., wage theft recovery, immigration, police tickets, health access, etc.), you may already have a translation process in place. Strengthen these processes by integrating translation into other areas of your work, such as campaigns, leadership development, and base-building.

If you have different staff for direct

services and organizing, designate shared spaces where those doing translation work can get together and discuss their work, share strategies, and compare processes.

### **Build a Collective Glossary**

Start by developing a glossary as a team, or develop a database with several glossaries. Your team will have to agree to a process to update the glossaries continuously. Collectively developed glossaries provide excellent opportunities for mutual cultural and political education, helping participants to acknowledge and respect different vocabularies and ways of speaking even within the same language. Glossaries also allow staff to practice leadership and facilitation skills, since translators need to be able to negotiate differences and agree to a certain translation of terms, while the discussion of political concepts offers a chance for political education.

## **Assemble a Translation Team**

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A great vision and a detailed assessment mean very little if you don't have the capacity to actually create multilingual spaces and resources. It comes down to having a good team!

Start with your *in-house* resources:

- ❖ Include multilingual criteria when hiring and offer opportunities for training to improve these skills.
- ❖ Recruit and train volunteers for multilingual tasks.
- ❖ Do not be afraid to ask people about their translation skills and evaluate their skill level. Ask to review writing samples or give them a document to translate that you can review

together.

- ❖ Consider outsourcing if you are part of a larger coalition or work closely with allies that have translation resources.

When assembling your translation team, look not only for good translators, but also for good team players. It is very difficult to work on translation with individuals that invest too much ego on their translation or have very limited abilities to deal with conflict. Remember to be explicit about the fact that translations will preferably be completed and reviewed by native speakers. Build in time for the review.

## Working with Translators

### Find Volunteer Translators

In many cases, service-providing areas of our organizations have access to a good pool of volunteers. Coordinate your organizing and service teams in order to have a shared sense of what volunteers can help with translation. (See the section on **Building Organizational Commitment**, page 26, for ideas and criteria about volunteers).

### Contracts

For major projects, most professional translators will request a contract. Some translators require contracts even for smaller projects. We recommend starting with small projects when working with a new translator to make sure you work well together.

Consider these tips when writing up a contract:

- ❖ Translators should preferably work from English to their native language. If this is not possible, translators should submit samples of their

work for review before being hired.

- ❖ Translators' work should be open to review by other translators.
- ❖ Translators should provide references from previous employers and samples of translations.
- ❖ Always remember to give credit to translators on larger published reports and documents. At the same time, be clear about organizational ownership of translated text.

For examples of contracts, see Model Contract for Translators at the American Translators Association website. ([http://www.atanet.org/careers/model\\_translation\\_job\\_contract.php](http://www.atanet.org/careers/model_translation_job_contract.php))

### The Translation Process

Remember! First finish the work, then start the translation process. Never send drafts for translation!

1. *Assign* translation pieces
2. *Translate* pieces
3. *Review* translations
4. Quality Control: criteria for quality control?
5. *Edit/integrate*
6. Review the layout
7. Printed materials
8. Online materials

## Translated Documents

### Translate Outreach Materials

Having outreach materials (i.e., flyers, invitations, campaign materials, etc.) translated to the languages our membership speaks and reads brings also the opportunity for our members and allies to do outreach with their families, neighbors and friends.

We know how important strong outreach is for base building, membership

recruitment and retention; since one of our central sources of power is our power in numbers, translation becomes a really wise investment of our resources.

Don't sacrifice quality! A poorly translated outreach flyer can discourage participation by sending the message that the organization doesn't take your involvement seriously.

## Translate Internal Documents

In multilingual organizing spaces, translation is an important tool for empowerment. Translating internal organizational documents opens the door for a whole new level of participation for members and staff who speak languages other than English. Deeper participation allows different people to engage in decision-making conversations, political analysis, and strategy discussions with a different level of power and confidence.

Many grassroots organizations now routinely translate their reports, bylaws,

and all important documents into the different languages spoken by their board members. A sincere investment in translation helps avoid tokenism or habitual, half-hearted inclusion of other languages.

## Document Your Work

Establish a clear system to document translated materials. With today's technology you can have an online database where all staff can have access to translated resources and you can avoid the frustrating situation of translating something that was already translated by someone in the organization.

# Mechanics and Ergonomics

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Translation involves repetitive physical motions, so translators need to take care of themselves!

Here are a few things to consider:

- ❖ **Eyes:** One screen or two screens? On MS Word, you can have two documents side by side on the same screen. Those with access to two monitors prefer to have two screens. Others prefer to use the second monitor to have a document

opened for the glossary and for online research.

- ❖ **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:** This is a common problem caused by repetitive motion, such as typing. For some information and tips about preventing and treating this condition, here is a good place to start: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/carpal-tunnel-syndrome.printerview.all.html>

# Online Tools and Resources

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Our approach is centered around translation in the context of community organizing so future resources will follow this theme. For an excellent collection of tools and resources from a translator perspective, including many of the topics listed in this section of the toolkit please visit the web page Tips for Translators, (<http://www.tipsfortranslators.com/tips.asp>). Some topics we will

be exploring in future versions of this toolkit and through conversations in forums and blogs on our online learning community are included below.

*Glossaries:* Online documents with shared editing capacities can be a great way to do this. If you have a website you might want to share your glossary there so your members and allies



can have access to it. On your glossary explain your criteria when choosing, main aspect: Relevance to the audience (localization and cultural relevance)

*Online Translation tools* can be an emergency resource to try to communicate the meaning of a document. Google translate and other resources are getting better but translations done using these tools still contain many mistakes, this is why we recommend using them only as a last resort. In our experience sometimes it takes more time to correct a translation done using these tools than doing the translation itself.

*Online Language Dictionaries:* Very useful tool for clarification. The best ones offer a combination of definition of terms, different possible translations, synonyms as well as forums where users share their questions and answers. *WordReference* is our favorite and includes many languages.

*A couple of online resources:*

Translation. Getting it Right: A Guide to Buying Translation American Translators Association 2011

Tips for Translators (website: <http://www.tipsfortranslators.com/tips.asp#CONTRACTS>)

*Here are some links to the websites of organizations that in our opinion are modeling some best practices advancing Language Justice in a community-organizing context*

APEN - Asian Pacific Environmental Network

CAA AV - Organizing Asian Communities

CPA - Chinese Progressive Association  
Padres y Jovenes Unidos

POWER – People Organized to Win  
Employment Rights

# Planning an Event

A successful multilingual event happens when language is considered in the earliest stages of planning. A main goal of your event should be to ensure the full participation of the various languages that may be spoken by your attendees.

## Steps for Planning Events

### Language Outreach

- ❖ Active outreach is essential for a successful meeting or event. Take into account who you want to attend and what languages are spoken by those constituencies. Aim for a balanced number of speakers of different languages.
  - ❖ Written materials and personal outreach communication need to be in the language of the invited community.
    - Receiving an invitation in your own language to participate in a multilingual space sends a much more powerful message than receiving an invitation in the dominant language and later being asked if interpretation is “needed.”
  - ❖ Use the registration process as part of outreach to determine the language needs of participants. That information allows the planning committee to define what and where interpretation and translation will be needed, and whether interpretation will be simultaneous or consecutive.
- ❖ Be sure to consider translation needs when budgeting resources and recruiting volunteers.
  - ❖ Recognize and appreciate the translation work that is done by bilingual staff, members, or volunteers. In the case of staff, make sure translation is in their work plan so they aren't forced to translate on their own time!
  - ❖ Have a very clear understanding of deadlines and rates when hiring translators. Write up a contract for larger translation projects (i.e., research or annual report) and try to work with translators you know or from whom you've received good references.
  - ❖ Look for translators that come from the community you are working with, who will understand the nuances of the ways language is spoken in your contexts. (In the translator world, this is called “localization.”)

### Translation

- ❖ Translate all flyers, petition, and other organizational materials to effectively reach speak and read languages other than English.
  - ❖ Incorporate time for translation and translation revisions into the planning schedule.
- ### Interpreters and Equipment
- ❖ Line up your interpretation team. It is important to have two interpreters available for any session, able to switch off and to help each other. This practice helps to maintain the interpretation quality, and the participants' trust in the process.
  - ❖ Assess new interpreters' capabilities and check their references whenever possible. Make sure they are trained and experienced in the type of interpretation you need (simultaneous or consecutive).



- ❖ If you are doing simultaneous interpretation, you will need interpretation equipment. If you don't own equipment, start looking to borrow or rent it at least one month before the event.
- ❖ Test the equipment beforehand! If possible, do it in the venue itself because the architecture of a room can create transmission-reception problems. Have a good supply of extra batteries and sign-out sheets ready.

### Agenda

- ❖ Once you do outreach in different languages, make sure there is actually space for participation in those languages! Otherwise, you are failing to uphold a commitment you made to your community.
- ❖ Build the additional time needed for interpretation into your agenda.
- ❖ Have a plan to cover multiple spaces or breakout groups, and to take flip-chart input in all languages.
- ❖ Send materials to the interpreters ahead of time to help them prepare

for the topic and get familiar with particular terms for the event. Also designate a contact person to work with them before and during the event. (Note: it is helpful to send them any written materials that include topics and language that will be used at the event).

- ❖ If you provide childcare, you may need to find childcare providers who speak the language of the parents coming.
- ❖ **It is also helpful to have facilitators be able to facilitate in different languages and consciously plan how they can help to open a welcoming space for multiple languages.**

### The Day of the Event

- ❖ Are there people and signs ready in multiple languages to welcome and help participants find their way?
- ❖ Have you had an orientation for the interpretation team with the event organizers?
- ❖ Have you set up an "Interpretation Station" for interpreters and

for people to pick up and return equipment?

- ❖ Have you tested the equipment in the room where the event will take place?
- ❖ Have you briefed all participants on the importance of working with the interpreters to take co-responsibility in creating an inclusive multilingual space?
- ❖ Will be there facilitation/presentations in different languages? (Encourage facilitators to bring all languages into the space as close to the beginning as possible).
- ❖ Is there someone lined up to help gather equipment back and recheck it?
- ❖ Remember to thank the interpreters for their hard work!

Don't panic if there are bumps along the way! Even the most experienced groups encounter problems. Be prepared to resolve issues as they arise, and remember the commitment to shared responsibility that was established at the beginning of the event. While there may be some problems, you don't have to solve them alone!

### Follow-Up

- ❖ **Event documentation:** Have a plan for translation of the follow-up report or materials, as well as follow-up outreach in appropriate languages.
- ❖ **Evaluating and improving** – Look back at the event and evaluate what went well and what could be improved. Solicit feedback from translators and interpreters. If you take notes, you can even use this as an opportunity to keep growing and updating your glossaries.

❖ **Identify local resources.** In the long run, it is helpful to build a list of translators, interpreters, and groups that own equipment in order to help ease the steps of this process.

- Successful language justice organizations build in financial support for this highly-skilled work. If there are limited resources, finding skilled volunteers willing to donate or trade their time and skills can help to bridge the gap. It is important to support people who can do this work well and so if resources are limited as you build this work it is important to be creative in thinking about how to support volunteer interpreters or translators. This could include training and mentoring support, providing travel opportunities, swapping skills across organizations... and other possibilities that you can dream up!

### Resources

**Interpretation and Translation: Power Tools for Sharing Power in Grassroots Leadership Development**, Alice Johnson, El Centro Hispano

**What did they say? Interpreting for Social Justice, An Introductory Curriculum**  
Roberto Tijerina, Highlander Center, 2009

# Planning an Event – Checklist

## 1. Logistics

- Date, Time and Place
- Schedule – how long
- Type of event – conference, interview, appointment, meeting
- Topic of event
- Contact: Organizational point person
- Attendance – how many people?
- Space – how big is the space?

## 2. Plenary Sessions, breakouts

- If there are breakouts, do they occur in the same room or in other rooms?
- How far are those rooms?
- Are they far enough that you can use equipment on different frequencies without interference?
- Do the facilitators and presenters also bring multiple languages into the space?

## 3. Welcoming, childcare, registration, etc.

What other language needs are there? How can these be met?

## 4. Language

- How many languages are represented in the room?
- Do you want interpretation into every language or to a limited number?
- Simultaneous or consecutive?
- Will folks be free to attend any session with interpretation provided or will there be sessions conducted in other languages?
- Will there be time to introduce the interpreting at the beginning?

## 5. Planning

- Is it possible to visit the site ahead of time for a walk-through?
- Are there any materials (especially written) that can be submitted to the interpreters prior to the event so that they can prepare?
- Is it possible to get a written copy of any prepared remarks or speeches, preferably prior but at least at the event?
- What is the capacity of the planning with the given lead time?
- For a large or multiple day event, is it possible to have a planning/orientation session with interpreters?

## 6. Translation

- Is the request limited to verbal interpretation or also written materials?
- Who is responsible for translating documents?
- Will written announcements at the site be translated?
- Plan for final documents – to be sent for translation

## 7. Staffing

- How many interpreters are needed to accomplish the work? (Ideal and minimum)
- What resources do you have for interpretation and translation? What ideas do you have for increasing resources for this work? What are steps to take?
- What is the alternate plan in case there are not enough interpreters?
- Who is responsible for the recruitment and coordination of the interpreters?

(Adapted from **What Did They Say? Interpreting for Social Justice: An introductory Curriculum** Roberto Tijerina, Highlander Research and Education Center, 2009)

- Are you just asking folks to show up and interpret or to be part of a team?
  - If a team, who is coordinating?
  - If asked to coordinate a team, am I responsible for finding the interpreters or will you hire them and I just coordinate?
- Will there be any type of compensation or is the interpreter being asked to donate their services?
- If there is compensation, will it be monetary, a meal, a waived registration fee, or travel costs?
- Are there any arrangements for interpreter care?
  - Will there be water for the interpreter?
  - If there is food, can the interpreters partake?
- For larger conferences – is there a room that can be the interpreter office where interpreters and coordinators can work, hang out/talk, take short breaks, keep snacks, etc?
- Is there a designated person who interpreters can go to with questions or problems?

## 8. Equipment

- What type of and how much equipment is needed?
- Who is responsible for obtaining the equipment?
- Who is responsible for handing it out and tracking it?
- Who is responsible if a piece of equipment is damaged or lost?
- Does this include batteries? If not, who is responsible for having plenty of back up batteries?
- In a conference with breakouts in different rooms, will someone be running the equipment between rooms and sessions or are the interpreters carrying the equipment from place to place?
- Is there an opportunity to come test the equipment in the space before the event?
- If using sets of equipment, are they compatible?
- Is there a backup plan in case the equipment doesn't work?

## 9. Evaluation and Follow-up

- What is your plan for getting feedback from interpreters, translators and participants about quality and access for language at the event?

# Building Organizational Commitment



An organizational commitment to language justice means that support and resources for multilingual work are integrated throughout your organization’s various stages of planning, communications, budgeting and fundraising, and evaluations, and both among staff and with the greater community. Building organizational commitment is a continuous, ongoing process; an organization that is truly committed to language justice will be attentive to the changing needs and dynamics of the communities with which it works, and will adjust its multilingual practices accordingly.

Building organizational commitment means taking a holistic view of how your staff can uphold the values of language justice effectively and consistently. Often, this arises from a political commitment that underlies the values of language justice; that is, recognition of the way multiple languages enrich, enliven, and deepen conversation, and of language justice as an essential condition for authentic grassroots leadership and participatory decision-making.

Finally, organizational commitment is an important way to reduce stress and anxiety among staff. By developing an intentional strategy for language justice work, you will allow for adequate

planning so that staff aren’t scrambling at the last minute to find an interpreter or translator for an event or publication. Having a strategic plan for multilingual work also sends the positive message that language justice is integral to your organization’s mission and values, rather than something “extra” or dispensable that is done only when time and resources permit.

Building your organization’s commitment to language justice will be an ongoing process. The “Continuum of Commitment” included in this section provides useful examples of what different levels of commitment might look like.





This section of the toolkit provides concrete tips and strategies to guide you through this process, including the following topics:

1. Building Understanding and Intention Among Organization Staff
2. Mapping: Assessing Needs, Strengths, and Opportunities
3. Planning and Evaluating
4. Interpreters, translators, equipment
5. Resources: budgeting and fundraising
6. Communications
7. Community Cooperation for Language Justice
8. Mapping Exercise

### **Building Understanding and Intention Among Organization Staff**

An organization is made up of individuals, so the first step to building organizational commitment is to make sure that individual staff members are committed to the values of language justice and the importance of making multilingual work a priority. Not only are these individual understandings and commitments essential to garnering support and resources for this work, but without collective understanding and intention, the time-consuming tasks of interpretation and translation will inevitably fall on the shoulders of bilingual staff members. These select staff members cannot carry out language justice work effectively and sustainably without the broader support of the organization as a whole.

As important as building understanding is building intention. Multilingual spaces are often created out of necessity to enable communication between individuals and/or constituencies who speak different languages. But in order to build successful multilingual spaces (both meeting and communication spaces), organizations must make an intentional, ongoing commitment to the work. Continuing to assess ways to build and maintain this commitment helps to integrate language justice work into all aspects of the organization over the long-term.

Here are a few tips for building **understanding** and **intention**:

- ❖ To get your staff “on board,” have everyone participate in an event with thorough and high-quality interpretation and translation. The experience of a well-designed multilingual space helps people appreciate how many voices and perspectives are brought into the room that would otherwise be silent.
- ❖ Include language in conversations about power and oppression in the political education discussions and work the organization might do.
- ❖ Put changes in writing to ensure their permanence. Incorporate concrete commitments to language justice into your mission and vision statements, and add specific multilingual strategies as goals and activities to your work-plans.
- ❖ Use strategic planning processes as opportunities to build organizational consensus around these themes. Ideally, those involved in the discussion will already have experienced multilingual space/dialogue.

## Mapping: Assessing Needs, Strengths, and Opportunities within Your Organization

The dynamics and makeup of all organizations are vastly different. Even organizations doing similar work will have differing needs for language support depending on the communities in which they're located and with which they work. In order to develop a strategic plan for long-term language justice work in your organization, it's important to start by assessing where you are now. What do you need? Where are your strengths? Which staff should be part of these conversations and initial efforts? What are some potential roadblocks, and who might be able to provide support and resources?

We call this thorough assessment process "mapping," and we've included a detailed description of "mapping" in a lesson plan format that any group or organization can use and adapt as needed! Ultimately, the goal is to tease apart the many factors and dimensions of your organizations, communities, and the work you do and hope to do, in order to integrate language justice thoroughly at all stages and best identify your resources so you can take advantage of them whenever possible.

Mapping takes many different forms depending on the organization and on the amount of language justice work that is already happening. We've found that mapping can be particularly useful if sporadic interpretation or translation has been taking place; mapping can take this work to the next level and make it something more strategic and institutional.

The questions provided in the lesson plan address the following topics and considerations:

- ❖ What will the mapping process look like? Who will be involved?
- ❖ What languages are spoken by your constituencies? What particular forums are in need of multilingual support?
- ❖ How can you find and sustain high quality interpretation and translation, and how might volunteers help during this process?
- ❖ Where are places/people who can provide support and leadership? How will you continue to build leadership within your organization?
- ❖ Who can you collaborate with in the community to strengthen your work?

## Looking Forward, Reflecting Back: Planning, Evaluating, and Documenting your Language Justice Work

Planning, evaluation, and documentation are important to ensure the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of your organization's language justice work.

An organization must be intentional about planning for language justice; otherwise, the commitment will likely slip away. Hopefully the mapping process will help you develop a concrete plan for building multilingual spaces and efforts into your organization's events, publications, and general culture and practices. Here are a few questions that are useful to consider as you plan for language justice work:

- ❖ Who can you partner with to strengthen the work?
- ❖ What needs to be done in advance of events to make them successful multilingual spaces?

Tip: It's helpful to have a working group with representatives from different areas of your organization assigned to the task of transforming this map into a specific work-plan with goals, activities, outcomes, and deadlines. Specifying the group of people responsible for making these plans is an important way to ensure that the mapping process is followed by action.

Make your plans as realistic as possible. You cannot do everything at once but every step forward helps you to move. If the plans are too big and overwhelming then they stay on paper.

- ❖ What should be done in terms of budgeting/fundraising to make the work possible?
- ❖ How will staff time be allocated to carry out language justice work?

Constant evaluation is an essential way to reflect on the work you've done and to make improvements based on your own observations and feedback provided by others involved (i.e., other staff members, the interpreters and translators, the participants/constituencies using interpretation and translation services). Make sure and include questions about language justice on evaluations forms and be sure to get feedback from constituents, interpreters and translators.

Finally, thorough documentation is an essential part of making a sincere and lasting organizational commitment to language justice. Documentation helps you keep track of what you've done so that you can chart your progress and identify potential areas for improvement. The work will become easier as your experience increases, and maintaining records help preserve that experience so more people can access and learn from it. Don't reinvent the wheel! Documentation leads to greater efficiency; when you have records of the work you've done, staff won't be forced to repeat work that has already been done in the past. And, of course, make sure your documentation is made accessible to all staff and is kept well organized; messy and hidden records are of no use to anyone.

Planning, evaluation, and documentation are all intimately connected. Ideally, your planning will be informed by the feedback gleaned from evaluations of past events. And evaluations will provide the most thorough,

accurate information if you've planned ahead and intentionally sought out feedback.

## Communications

Organizations rely on internal and external communication to hold groups together and convey their work to the outside world. Groups need plans for what internal documents, as well as external communications such as websites, social media, newsletters, and press releases need to be available in multiple languages. Having multilingual communication can help you to make a bigger impact in the community and with your leadership and members. And that requires time in the creation process and resources for translation to be available.

## Resources for language justice – budgeting and fundraising

There's no getting around it: language justice work requires money, and language justice work done *well* requires even more. To make sure those funds are available, organizations need to plan ahead to budget and fundraise for multilingual work.

Budgeting:

An organization committed to language justice must build financial support into its budget; this part of the budget should be considered as crucial as the amount budgeted for bookkeepers, organizers, and telephones. Resources reserved specifically for language work help ensure that the work is carried out effectively. The budget should cover payment for interpreters and translators, and equipment for simultaneous interpretation (as a rental or purchase). The budget can increase as needed. Although some organizations or groups

will use volunteers for interpreting and translating work, paying people to do this work will allow you to be more discriminating about the skills needed for the job and will help you develop ongoing relationships and build a reliable and sustainable pool of people to call.

Fundraising:

To secure specific funds for multilingual work, begin by educating funders and donors (including those whose first language is not the dominant one) about the importance of language justice and its relevance to your organization's mission and your community partners. Here are a few ways to integrate fundraising for language justice:

- ❖ Build this into your general budget as an ongoing expense.
- ❖ Look for a funder who will support the building of language justice in your strategic undertakings
- ❖ Invite funders to an event with high quality interpretation/translation so they appreciate the power of this work
- ❖ Build support among your members, donors, and leaders for language justice
- ❖ Seek out and support individuals who might provide interpretation or translation skills as volunteers
- ❖ Make language justice a source of revenue by providing language support services to other groups and agencies (i.e., renting out equipment, having translators and interpreters contract out for outside work either through the organization or independently, provide training and advice on building multilingual capacity)

## **Finding interpreters, translators and equipment... And establishing a strong volunteer program.**

To create a successful multilingual space, your organization will need to have a reliable pool of well-trained interpreters and translators, as well as access to interpretation equipment.

When you begin looking for interpreters and translators, it's often helpful to contact local institutions that also require interpretation and translation skills. For example, schools, churches, hospitals, and courthouses may be able to recommend individuals to contact for these services. Another option is to seek out young people from immigrant communities who are accustomed to interpreting for family and friends on a regular basis.

***Remember: An individual who is fluent in multiple languages will not necessarily be a good interpreter or translator.***

Before hiring a translator or interpreter for a project or event, it is crucial to test their skills and seek recommendations from others. Poor interpretation or translation will be frustrating for participants who rely on those services and can also feel disrespectful, sending the message that the organization does not consider their participation a genuine priority.

Once you find interpreters and translators who are interested in working with your organization, be sure to set up ways to provide training, mentoring, and other forms of support so they can continue to develop their skills. If you work with individuals who are formally trained as interpreters in other settings (i.e., hospitals, courtrooms), it will be important to orient them to your



organization's goals and values so that they can build their skills specific to social justice popular education spaces.

Developing a pool of skilled and reliable interpreters and translators makes all this work move so much more smoothly. Keep communication and information for people who can provide these services and work to encourage organizations to hire them and to compensate them. Having more resources for people helps to stabilize a dependable pool. **Be sure to recognize and appreciate the people who are providing these services!**

If interpreters and translators are being asked to volunteer their time and skill, or being asked to be paid less, think creatively about compensation. For example provide funds for travel and meals, alternate paid and non-paid jobs, offer discounts to events or trainings, pass the hat at events for interpretation, and trade resources with interpreter's collectives.

In most cases, the most successful multilingual spaces use simultaneous interpretation, and this process requires equipment. The typical equipment consists of a transmitter and microphone for the interpreter, and receivers and earphones for listeners. The "Interpretation Equipment" section of this toolkit, p. 15, provides detailed information to help you make a smart purchase if you decide to invest in interpretation gear. If you're not ready

or able to make that investment, contact other organizations in your area that already do simultaneous interpretation; they will often rent or loan out their equipment when it is not in use.

## Community Cooperation for Language Justice

The strongest language justice work happens when organizations collaborate with other members and groups in the broader community. Other local groups can help you identify and train interpreters and translators, locate equipment, and build multilingual capacity within a geographic area by making language justice work more visible and common. Providing more community resources to pay interpreters and translators helps to build a pool of skilled people who can devote time and attention to this critical work. Interpreters and translators collectives or cooperatives are a growing example of how to build local capacity for language justice. Look for a future case studies section to find out more about this.

### And one final word:

Language justice requires ongoing planning and attention in organizations. Many pitfalls occur along the way and the most important thing is to learn from both good and bad experiences and keep at it!!

A tip: Offering English or other language classes to meet community needs (i.e., English as a second, third or fourth language!) is a concrete way to help folks in your community attain job skills, navigate complicated systems and processes such as immigration. Providing classes also supports families in their efforts to stay connected to their roots and can build important bridges in your community.

# Building Organizational Commitment: Mapping Exercise



## Assessing Language Needs, Strengths, and Opportunities within Your Organization

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### GOAL:

An important first step in building organizational commitment to language justice is to “map” the needs, strengths, and opportunities for multilingual work in your organization and community. “Mapping” involves assessing where you are, measuring the need for multilingual strategies and spaces, and identifying strengths and opportunities to build on existing work.

### OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ Analyze needs for language support with an organization
- ❖ Analyze resources for language support
- ❖ Develop plans for increasing language support within your organization

The point of mapping is to get a visual representation of how this work is happening and to identify resources, opportunities, and potential roadblocks. There is no right or wrong way to map, so don't be intimidated! At the end of this exercise are some examples from various organizations, done in fairly short session at a language justice learning circle.

Drawing a picture or diagram helps you pinpoint actual needs, keep track of ongoing work, and identify creative possibilities.

### WHO:

Identify those within your organization and wider community who should be the facilitators and participants in the process. Those affected by the need for multilingual spaces (members, leaders, organizing staff, service providers staff, communications staff, etc.), in addition to those who would be involved in creating and sustaining these spaces (board members, senior staff, fundraisers, key allies, etc.) should be involved.

If you are earlier along in the process of building your organization's commitment to language justice, it might be more realistic for mapping to take place among a small group of interested people. This preliminary mapping exercise can help you to build a strategy within your organization for increasing education, support and commitment to this work.

**TIME NEEDED:** 2-4 hours, with ability to follow-up!

The time needed for this activity will depend on the size of your organization and the number of people participating in the process. If you are a small local community group, mapping will take less time. Mapping for large agencies with many branches takes more time and may require additional research.

Here is a collection of questions to help guide you through the mapping/assessment process.

**a.) Constituency and Language**

- What languages does your constituency speak?
- Where do they participate in your organization?
- Where do you hope they will participate?
- How can their participation strengthen the goals of the organization?
- Who is not involved because of the language barriers?
- How would multilingual spaces change their participation?

**b.) Organizational spaces and resources**

- Where are both meeting spaces and communication spaces (including websites, newsletters, blogs, outreach) that would work better if different languages were interpreted or translated?
- Where are documents kept that have been translated?

**c.) Interpretation and Translation Skills**

- Who and where are people with multilingual skills who help or could help with interpretation?
- Who and where are people with multilingual skills who help or could help with translation?
- What is their experience and skill level?
- Who has equipment if you want to do simultaneous interpretation?
- Are funds available for paying interpreters/translators or renting equipment?

- What can be done to raise funds for interpretation and translation? Who can do the fundraising?
- Who can provide financial support for this work?
- What training and mentoring help is needed to increase the skills of interpreters and translators?

**d.) Volunteer program:**

Do we have a volunteer program that can be a source for qualified interpreters and translators? Do we have members who might be willing and able to help? What changes would be needed to get there? What kind of support is needed to make this program sustainable? Who are our key institutional allies to get qualified volunteers?

**e.) Leadership and support**

- Is there support from people in leadership positions for language justice?
- Who else supports this work throughout the organization?
- Who might support this work with encouragement? What are ways to encourage support?

**f.) Community Resources and Collaboration**

- What other individual, groups or agencies are integrating interpretation and translation?
- What do you know or need to know to talk with them about collaboration or find out about resources, such as interpreters, translators, and equipment that may be available locally?

## ANALYSIS AND PLANNING – The Next Step

After you draw a map based on these considerations, take a little time to analyze where next steps and possibilities exist for furthering the work in a practical way. What are strengths? What are weaknesses? Where is the greatest need? Where are there possibilities to build upon? Who in the organization can help lead and support this work? What can you do to help educate and encourage support from more broadly in the organization?

The mapping can help to guide development of a plan that takes into account an overall look at the organization and an assessment of where you are now. Ideally you will have a working group with representatives from different areas of your organization, which will transform this assessment and map onto a specific and prioritized work-plan, with goals, activities, outcomes and deadlines; otherwise, the vision has the risk of being just a hallucination!



# Strategic communications:

## Initial thoughts about a language justice perspective

Strategic communication from a language justice perspective depends on community involvement. It is crucial to make strategic communications planning a participatory process with the communities where you are working. It must help to support your overall organizational strategies. Strategic communications can greatly enhance outreach, build involvement and move your strategies and campaigns. The communities affected and your issues should define each step of your strategy, to help ensure relevance and involvement and to support your membership recruitment and retention and leadership development process

Strategic communications planning should also work in conjunction with the other elements of language justice, including translation, interpretation and organizational capacity. For example, if you translate press materials, the translation should be relevant to the target audience, and developed with their unique needs in mind.

### Layers of strategy

The layers of strategy are key elements of effective strategic communication, and include:

Overall strategy

Media strategy

Message strategy

Access strategy

We will consider each of the layers of strategy from a language justice perspective.

### Overall strategy

It is critical to identify the overall strategy before implementing any other step in your communications plan. Some questions that may help to develop an overall strategy include:

- ❖ What is the problem?
- ❖ What is the solution?
- ❖ Who has the power to make that change?

- ❖ How do you define victory from a policy perspective?
- ❖ How do you define victory from an organizing (base building/leadership development) perspective?
- ❖ What actions will you take?
- ❖ Who must be mobilized to apply the necessary pressure? This final question refers to your target audience. The target audiences for your communications are extremely important. Some factors to consider include:

- The languages that they speak, including generational languages. For example, teens may have a different way of communicating in English.
- The best vehicles of communication: for some communities, social media may be the best mode, but for others Internet-based communications is not the best. For example, what might be a way to mobilize older Spanish-speaking groups who may be less comfortable with internet-based strategies? Would community meetings be a better alternative?

### Media strategy

After you have developed your overall strategy, think about what kind of media you will use to achieve your goals. For many communities, ethnic media outlets may be the most appropriate way to

access the communities and decision makers relevant to the campaign. Again, this will depend on your target audience.

If you decide to reach out to ethnic media outlets, make sure that you have spokespeople and staff who can actually speak in the different languages and that you have materials ready to go in those languages (e.g. press releases, letters to the editors, commentaries, fact sheets, etc.) as well as spokespeople who are trained and ready. For example, if a journalist calls asking to do an interview in Spanish, who will do the interview?

### **Message strategy**

Once you have developed your overall strategy, and have considered what media you will use, it's time to think about the message you want to develop that will support your goals.

Your message should also involve the community: this will help ensure that you are taking a language justice approach. To develop an effective message, consider questions like: What is the problem? Why does it matter? What is the solution?

Part of the message strategy is also deciding who the messengers will be. When considering this question from a language justice perspective, consider both the messengers as well as the languages they speak. Helping leaders to develop skills to deal with the media and to share their own insights and stories can be a powerful way to build your organization and to develop support and alliances.

### **Access strategy**

Your message and frame should be consistent across all communications, but the way you make it “newsworthy”

to appear in the media can change depending on your target audience. For example, if you are talking to a policy-maker, you might get his/her attention by linking your solution to a timely policy discussion. However, if you want to get the attention of the community, it may be more relevant to link your message and story to a local event.

Also consider the tools you use to access the media. These tools and resources should reflect language justice principles, including your website, internal communications, and social media sites. Consider which languages and communications tools will help you most effectively reach members, new supporters, and community members.

### **Internal Communication**

It is also important to take a look at your internal communications.

#### **Ensuring internal communications:**

Is there a need to translate materials, provide alternative documents or web-vehicles in various languages, or to integrate multiple languages into your outgoing communications? Planning how to integrate multiple languages into internal communications is essential for having a democratic organization and helps to build leadership from various languages within your community. This may include a newsletter, website, Face Book, and event announcements.

**Process to organize materials** – Make sure that you have systems to compile translated materials for future access. It can also be helpful to develop a glossary, both for consistency and for your organizational vocabulary. This can help to make communications more efficient, both for internal and external communications. (See **Translation** section of the Toolkit, page 17, for more ideas on this.)

### Reflection from Elandria Williams, Highlander Research and Education Center

Culture is at the essence of who African Americans are, both as a people and a community. Language is one of the primary ways in which culture is passed on from generation to generation.

Language takes place in many forms, from griots sharing stories to pass on knowledge, body movements either through sign language or dance, families telling stories and history to pass down through generations, banners and signs in protest or song and drum beats marking time and showing the way.

At the core of who we are as people and our ability to connect with others is language through the spoken and signed word. Even when our native tongues were taken from us during the Maafa/Middle Passage we created new languages out of many - the Sea Islands Gullah Geechee, New Orleans Creole and

many different dialectics of Ebonics to name a few. Preserving language, speaking in the language of your community, and recognizing the multiplicities of ways we communicate including through song and beats strike at the core of cultural racism, which is the power of racism to destroy, distort, discredit and discredit cultures. Language justice is necessary if we are going to build a broader movement for change and is essential for communities to talk to each other across the world and across the street.

While writing this planning for the 3rd Black Immigration Network Gathering is occurring, to strategize how to tackle the greatest civil rights and human rights issues of the day - criminalization, immigration policies, racial profiling, suppression of voter rights and more. The goal is to see how all of this can be done working in Black communities and



how black people can work together- African Americans with Immigrants and Refugees, in order to change the conditions impacting all Black people.

The conversation about language justice has barely been brought up because the idea of interpreting beyond two languages in the room is hard to imagine. But it is also up to us to push our allies in the language justice movement to include Spanish that is spoken in countries with large black communities (Cuba, Panama, Belize, Equatorial New Guinea, Columbia, etc.) as well as other languages spoken in South America, Africa, the Islands and other countries in working to build a language justice space where all can truly be heard.

We know how language and the written word have been used against us in the right to vote, in stealing land, and even in movement work. Creating a space for language justice in our organizations and in our work creates space for all of us to participate fully and to learn from perspectives and experiences not otherwise represented. There are many ways to make progress:

- ❖ It can be as small as mapping out your community and seeing what languages other than English are most spoken by people that could be in your member base, and then getting key documents translated into those languages.
- ❖ You could send a staff or member to a Multilingual Capacity Building/ Language Justice training to bring back skills to start incorporating into your work.
- ❖ Or you can partner with a group in your neighborhood or city that

is working on a similar issue but using another language, and host a training, community forum or action doing simultaneous interpretation so that the members of both groups could learn from each other as well as collectively building a bigger power base.

- ❖ In order to transform this country and this world we are going to need everybody. We also must dismantle the cultural racism prevalent that is working to strip language from all of us, including our own resiliency languages like Ebonics and Haitian Creole.

### **Furthering this conversation and work:**

We will continue working on this important topic in future versions of this toolkit and through conversations in forums and blogs on our online learning community.

Some of the questions we will be exploring are:

- ❖ What are some strategic questions that will help us advance a shared analysis and identify some common actions to advance an agenda for Language Justice with communities of African Descent?
- ❖ What are the organizing and policy challenges and opportunities on the intersection of Language Justice and organizing work with and by people of African Descent?
- ❖ What are tools and resources that can help to further this work?
- ❖ Who are some of the groups leading the way?

## Written Resources:

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*“Interpretation and Translation - Strategies for Sharing our Power:”* by Alice Johnson, in *Bridge: A Popular Education Resource for Immigrant and Refugee Community Organizers* p. 22-35 Eunice Hyunhye Cho, Francisco Arguelles Paz y Puente, Miriam Ching Toon Louie, Sash Khokha, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights , [www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org)

Interpretation and Translation: Power Tools for Sharing Power in Grassroots Leadership Development Alice Johnson, El Centro Hispano, written for Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, 2002 Free

download: [http://www.mrbf.org/resource.aspx?catId=1#Interpretation\\_and\\_Translation](http://www.mrbf.org/resource.aspx?catId=1#Interpretation_and_Translation)

What Did They Say? Interpreting for Social Justice: An introductory Curriculum Roberto Tijerina, Highlander Research and Education Center, 2009, Contact: [swilliams@highlandercenter.org](mailto:swilliams@highlandercenter.org)

Estrategias Multilingues en la Iniciativa Comunidades Creando Ambiente Saludables, Colectivo Flatlander [http://derechoalasalud.org/sites/default/files/estrategias\\_multilingues\\_para\\_cche.pdf](http://derechoalasalud.org/sites/default/files/estrategias_multilingues_para_cche.pdf)

## Other Resources/Websites

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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Information, <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/carpal-tunnel-syndrome.printerview.all.html>

Translation: Getting It Right: A Guide to Buying Translation, American Translators Association 2011 [http://www.atanet.org/docs/Getting\\_it\\_right.pdf](http://www.atanet.org/docs/Getting_it_right.pdf)

Tips for Translators (A blog by Chantal Wilford) website: <http://www.tipstfortranslators.com/tips.asp#CONTRACTS>)

Model Contract for Translators at the American Translators Association website. ([http://www.atanet.org/careers/model\\_translation\\_job\\_contract.php](http://www.atanet.org/careers/model_translation_job_contract.php))

Word Reference, [www.wordreference.com](http://www.wordreference.com) – On line language dictionaries

On-line language justice learning community: [www.proyectocual.org](http://www.proyectocual.org)

## Organizations

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Colectivo Flatlander  
(Spanish) [www.colectivoflatlander.org/](http://www.colectivoflatlander.org/)  
(English) [www.colectivoflatlander.org/en](http://www.colectivoflatlander.org/en)

Highlander Research and Education Center, [www.highlandercenter.org](http://www.highlandercenter.org)

The Praxis Project  
[www.thepraxisproject.org](http://www.thepraxisproject.org)

Communities Creating Healthy Environments  
<http://ccheonline.org/home>

Center for Participatory Change  
[www.cpcwnc.org](http://www.cpcwnc.org)

Wayside Center for Popular Education (Virginia)  
<http://waysidecenter.org>

Boston Interpreter Collective  
[www.interpretercollective.org](http://www.interpretercollective.org)



## Examples of best practices on language justice among CCHE grantees

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Asian Pacific Environmental Network  
<http://www.apen4ej.org/index.htm>

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos  
<http://www.padresunidos.org/>

Chinese Progressive Association,  
San Francisco <http://cpasf.org/>

POWER, People Organized to Win Employment  
Rights, San Francisco  
(English) <http://www.peopleorganized.org/>  
(Spanish) <http://www.peopleorganized.org/?lang=es>

CAAAV – Committee against Anti-Asian  
Violence, New York <http://caaav.org/>

## Language Access Coalitions

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Language Access Coalition of DC  
(Washington, D.C.)  
<http://www.dclanguageaccess.org/about-the-dc-language-access-coalition.html>

Language Access Coalition of NOLA  
(New Orleans, Louisiana)  
<http://reachnola.org/langpartlac.php>

## Interpretation Equipment

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Babelbox  
[www.theBabelbox.com](http://www.theBabelbox.com)

Williams Sound equipment  
[www.williamssound.com](http://www.williamssound.com)

## Dealers – Interpretation Equipment

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Barinas Translation Consultants  
800 Hope Tree, San Antonio, TX 78260-6814  
[www.barinas.com](http://www.barinas.com)  
[info@barinas.com](mailto:info@barinas.com)  
1-(800)-909-0093

Lexicon-Global  
[www.lexiconusa.com](http://www.lexiconusa.com)  
[sales@Lexicon-Global.com](mailto:sales@Lexicon-Global.com)  
1-(800)-792-5020

# APPENDIX: Language Justice Organizational Continuum

This Continuum provides a way to see how language justice advances within organizations. Different organizations can start in many different places and there is not always a linear line but check out where your work is and some next steps you might take as an organization.

## What is “language justice”?

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For us, language justice is about building and sustaining multilingual spaces in our organizations and social movements so that everyone’s voice can be heard both as an individual and as part of a diversity of communities and cultures. Valuing language justice means recognizing the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle lan-

guage barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice.

No single or static definition for language justice exists. We expect that our understanding of the concept of language justice and its implications for movement-building will continue to change and deepen as the movement grows

## What is a multilingual space?

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*“A multilingual space: A constructed space where all languages in the room are on equal footing in terms of being spoken, written on flipcharts, in the handouts, etc., and no language holds an advantage over another.*

*Speakers of all languages share in the “out loud” space and everybody will at some point plug in the discussion through interpreting headphones. Speaking English is not an advantage over others.*

*A ML space creates room for the agen-*

*da to flow according to other cultural norms besides the dominant white US cultural ones, allows for other styles of facilitation to come up and allows people to participate with cultural pride in speaking their own language because a multilingual space works to break down the feeling on non English as handicap”*

This quote was written by Andrea Arias and Alice Johnson on butcher paper at a training on multilingual spaces during the NNIRR BRIDGE Trainers Bureau meeting in Los Gatos, California on 6/3/2006.

	<b>Dominant Language Only</b>	<b>Occasional Language Support</b>	<b>Building Solid Commitment</b>	<b>Language Justice Community</b>
<b>Commitment</b>	Determination to operate only in dominant language.	Individuals within organization start to raise questions, work to provide some language support.	Organization starts to take on a commitment to language justice but support is uneven. Staff and volunteers have some knowledge around multilingual strategies and some share analysis around Language Justice.	Language justice becomes part of the overall planning, budgeting, and fundraising work. Leadership fully supports this work and all staff and volunteers are invested in the process.
<b>Interpretation</b>	No interpreters in sight.	Multilingual people, often volunteers or staff with other jobs, work to provide interpretation at events, often whispering to small groups.	Resources start being committed to compensating people, designating staff time for language justice work. Some training and mentoring for interpreters and translators.	Pool of interpreters and translators available, supported and trained, from the same communities we work with. Multilingual events happen on a regular basis.
<b>Translation</b>	All written communications in dominant language.	Group scrambles right before or during events to translate in reaction to need. Only materials that are considered the most important are translated.	Translation thought about ahead of time, translators identified, glossary developing, notes taken in the different languages present in the room. There is a plan for translation of organizational and programmatic documents.	Glossary developed, smooth translation process set up with timelines, good quality control for translations, materials filed for later review. Documents are generated in other languages besides the dominant one. Solid team of staff, volunteers and independent professional translators with resources to pay them when needed.
<b>Equipment</b>	No interpretation equipment.	Looking for equipment.	Buying or sharing equipment.	Equipment is used frequently by organization and shared with others in the community. Groups know how to maintain and upkeep equipment.
<b>Communication and Documentation</b>	All communications are in dominant language.	Occasional materials are translated, often at the last minute. Sporadic outreach to non-dominant language media.	Regular translation systems start being set up in organization. Regular communication and training for spokespeople in multiple languages and regular outreach to media in non-dominant language as well as smaller media sources.	Translation becomes regular for all communications – including website, outreach, newsletters, etc.  Good Documentation for translations, media sources and contacts.

	<b>Dominant Language Only</b>	<b>Occasional Language Support</b>	<b>Building Solid Commitment</b>	<b>Language Justice Community</b>
<b>Planning and Evaluation</b>	No planning around language.	Right before events, people work to find interpreters for event. Often interpretation is just whispering for participants and done spontaneously.	Language planning for events and organization begins, organization thinks about needs and plans next steps.	Language justice planning is part of strategic, annual planning with staffing and a work plan. Language Justice Lens used for all event planning.
<b>Building resources, financial support</b>	No resources to support any other languages - Annoyance at suggestion of non-dominant language being important.	Organization finds money to support work by scrambling , or has volunteers or bilingual staff members to help.	Organization starts to have resources for language justice work more regularly based upon shared co-responsibility of fundraising and recruitment of volunteers.	Funding built into budget as on-going expense. If a larger organization, may hire a staff person to provide language support. Commitment to sustained effort to recruit and train volunteers.
<b>Broadening language justice, fighting for just policies and access</b>	“English Only” attitude by inertia and/ or omission. Hidden, sometimes open, message that the only legitimate way to speak and write in the space is English. Not speaking English is seen as failure and deficit. Assumption that English is the “natural way of doing things” and that white - middle class discourse is the right way to do it and the standard to measure other forms of expression.	Organization supports efforts to oppose “English Only” policies. Helps with referrals to ESL classes and occasionally translates some resources.	Organization develops and applies multilingual strategies and commits to develop internal capacity, and supports efforts by allies to develop their Language Justice analysis and capacity. Organization engages on policy campaign to advance language justice, including access to services in different languages and ESL classes but is open to a vision that goes beyond this.	Support of language justice work in the broader community, with coalitions and other organizations.  Local, state and government language policies addressed, organized around a language justice framework that goes beyond access to English and promotes a vision of racial justice, democratic participation in equality and affirmation of Culture and Language as human rights.
<b>Base building and Leadership Development</b>	The only way to participate is by speaking, reading and writing the dominant language. Speaking other languages is not seen as an asset but as a limitation or deficit.	Outreach for events and services is done in different languages but there is very limited availability of translated materials or interpretation at events or services.	Translated materials and interpretation is provided at events and services are offered in multiple languages. Organizers, service providers and leaders operate, train and facilitate in different languages.	Board documents and meetings are done in multilingual way; leadership represents people from all language groups. Decision making spaces in the organization are multilingual.