

RAW COPY

FORUM ON LANGUAGE AND DISABILITY ACCESS
HOW ORGANIZATIONS ENSURE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION
QUALITY

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2025

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(Captioner standing by to receive the link for the webinar).

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: -- we organize these forums twice a year because we want to learn from each other. Some of us participated in other webinars and received a very good amount of information but there's always something new that we learn. I speak for myself. I join every webinar that I can in regards to language access and there's always something new that we learn. So with that being said I hope that today everyone is going to learn something new and thank you, thank you for joining us.

So let me move this slide. I want to go through some logistics. Just wanted to make everyone aware that this presentation is being recorded. And then it will be available for viewing later at the DMAS website. We will be sharing the presentation also because you can see that there are some links that you cannot access right now while being in the presentation. But know we will be sharing this presentation with everyone that registered and we will also post it on the DMAS site.

In the chat if you feel comfortable sharing your name, your job title, organization, please do so while we are going through the logistics. We find it very helpful for everyone else to see who has joined and, I don't know, ink it's a piece of encouragement to know how many people are here willing to learn more to help with language and disable access.

We also wanted to let you know that we have Virginia relay, with Remote Conference Captioning. Is everything good, Jesus, with the captioning?

>> JESUS PEREZ: I just sent the link for the event and I am waiting to see if it work for the captioner. I will keep you posted.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: There's also automated captioning. We have two American Sign Language interpreters, we have Ally and Katie. Thank you for being here today. And if you experience anyone in the audience experience any difficulties, please send us an e-mail to the civil rights coordinator at dmas.virginia.gov. Jesus is monitoring that account, as well.

>> JESUS PEREZ: Montserrat?

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yes.

>> JESUS PEREZ: I want to inform you the live captioning is working now. I just copied the link in the chat. And we have the automated and live captions. You only have to click in that link.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. If anyone wants to follow the webinar using live captions -- sorry, using live captions, as Jesus said, just copy and paste that link into your browser and you can size your browser to fit as you prefer so you can follow the captions.

All right. So let's go very quickly through the agenda. What we have planned for today. We started with introductions. As mentioned earlier, we will open or Sara Cariano, she will do the opening keynote. She's the Division Director, the Eligibility Policy & Outreach team or unit here at DMAS. We will also have around 1:10 a brief presentation about translation review process. I will be introducing that presentation and performing that presentation because this is a project that we have initiated and completed at DMAS. So I just thought that it would be very helpful for others to know experience with quality assurance with translations.

And then around 1:30 we will have a panel discussion, we will have Kahlil Thomas, the language access quality specialist for the City of Philadelphia. He works at the Office of Immigrant Affairs. And we will also have in the panel discussion Christina Bonilla-Barboza. She's the language access Program Manager, Public Access & Innovation for TriMet. We will have a very interesting discussion around 1:30 about quality assurance and how Kahlil and Christina, they have done initiatives at their jobs or their organizations about quality assurance. So can't wait to have that discussion with them to see what else we can learn.

And then towards the end we'll have the quality -- sorry, the Q&A -- again, if you have any questions, feel free to put

them in the chat. And then we will have some closing remarks.

All right. Well, so without further ado, I wanted to give a very brief presentation to our keynote speaker today. She is Sara Cariano. And she's the Eligibility Policy & Outreach Division Director at DMAS. She oversees the eligibility, policy and also the civil right unit. She worked prior at the poverty law center of the center for health commons.

Sara helped to grow and manage enroll Virginia, the Virginia poverty law center ACA Navigator program which provides marketplace and Medicaid assistance, community outreach and education so she's an expert in Medicaid. She became an expert before she even joined DMAS. She worked with staff and partners across Virginia to reach vulnerable populations and help them obtain coverage.

She also advocated at Virginia's general assembly to expand coverage options and ensure Medicaid program and other health information is accessible to other Virginians. Sara complete her undergraduate degree at the University of Richmond. We are thrilled, Sara, that you're here today to do your keynote opening. Without further ado, Sara, if you want the share words with the audience, the floor is yours.

>> SARA CARIANO: So I'm excited to have so many people joining us today. I saw even someone from RPS in there, I love, that's where my kids go to school. Thank you for your participation. I think the Hampton school is in there, too. Excited to see the diversity of participants coming in and putting where they're working and who they're serving in the chat. Thank you for that. I wanted to thank Montserrat and Jesus and the civil rights unit for putting these forums on. I get to say a few words and learn from the wonderful panelists they have lined up. Thank you for the effort you put into these events.

As Montserrat said, the civil rights unit is within the division I oversee. I just moved into my division a few months ago. This is my first forum in this role. I've been to other forums. I'm really excited. The work they're doing for the agency across the agency coordinating our translations and other accommodations for members for the appeals division is incredibly impactful. So I'm excited to be here and working with them, as well. Throughout my career I spent a decade at VPLC and doing that enrollment assistance work through the Navigator program. I learned so much through working with the different stakeholders and different communities that I was able to serve.

It was really clear from the beginning that the populations that needed the most assistance with that enrollment piece with understanding the programs were folks who had to kind of

overcome additional barriers including language access barriers so as our program grew and developed it began to serve specific populations that we were able to identify as having these additional barriers and developing programs, developing materials and fine-tuning them with the community to make sure what we were working on, what we were providing really was able to serve all Virginians, not just those who speak English or those who went the certain places. We really strove to reach everyone where they were and in a manner that they could understand that was our priority. I'm just so grateful that here at DMAS that priority continues on through the Civil Rights unit and the members that we are serving. It's clear that it's so important for folks to be able to read their notices, to understand the applications, understand when something is being asked of them.

And all of this is -- the goal is to help folks get that coverage that they're eligible for, prevent unnecessary denials, case closures, serve the members. It helps us run a more efficient program which is always creating more work for eligibility staff as well with. So serving their members and helping them making sure we are communicating correctly. It also helps us run a better program. As a secondary benefit there.

But in that process we have done a lot of work to provide those and I think the next step for us as an agency was really kicking off this quality initiative and looking at our translations and how -- when we have in-house folks who can review Spanish translations and make sure they're accurate but when we are looking at languages such as Farsi, making sure the translations are of a high quality. Montserrat and the former manager John, there are mechanisms that can be used to bring in that next level of quality, the next level of assurance to make sure the communications we are sending out were accurate. That's what started this quality initiative that Montserrat is going to share today. I love that we continue to grow and improve the services that we are providing to our members.

And I'm so excited, the panelists that we have today, they're further along in that process in they're roles. They have more experience with quality assurance. I'm so grateful for them for being here, for sharing with us and helping us learn. And they're the experts. So I'm going to turn it back over to Montserrat to share about our project. And then get on with the panelists so they can teach us and just thank you to them, as well. We are so excited to have you today.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you so much, Sara, for this wonderful introduction and thank you for all you do at DMAS and for making sure that all of the notices and

communications are accessible to everyone. Thank you so much.

All right. So as we explained earlier, I'm just going to go through the project that we completed here recently within this year at the Department of Medical Assistance Services about the translation review process.

So the translation review is the quality assurance step where a trained translator reviews a completed translation to make sure it's accurate, clear and culturally appropriate as Sara mentioned, Jesus and I and we have another team member, Theresa, as the civil rights unit we complete a lot of translations for members so it's a very important initiative because we receive the translations back so we want to make sure that they are accurate, clear, and culturally appropriate. So it is important to have the step in the process because you want to make sure that you comply with the industry standards and the client's requirements, and then once you receive that quality assurance feedback, then you can just implement to improve it for future translation.

So it's a very important step in the process. I thought it was going to be very good information for everyone that does work related to translations and interpretations. I think this is going to be helpful to know. So the slide that we have here is original English paragraph that we translate over and over again. And then we have also the Arabic translation on this slide. While we get as mentioned earlier we do a lot of translation work. And when we receive the translation, this is what we see.

I don't speak or I don't write in Arabic. I'm sure a lot of people in the audience don't read Arabic so when you see an Arabic written paragraph you have to trust you're using an appropriate vendor that is using a qualifying translator to produce this translation. But of course we just don't know.

So that's what we were thinking, okay, we need to add a quality assurance step to make sure that the translation -- not because we don't trust our vendor but just to ensure that we are providing accurate translations.

So I thought that this slide representing very well how we feel and probably how most of you feel when you receive a translation that it's written in a language that you don't necessarily understand. Again, in-house at the Department of Medical Assistance Services Jesus and I, we speak Spanish, we write in Spanish. So it is wonderful when we get translations in Spanish because we can tell. But when it's in another language, we had that dilemma that we needed to implement a step for quality assurance.

So when we do the translation review or experience with this translation review, it's not because we want to catch or

critique different translation styles. We don't want to catch maybe somebody is using this word because in Arabic because let's say it expressed better for them. Usually when we get involved with quality assurance we want to make sure that what we have translated is accurate. If you have experience with translations you know that linguists have this preferences for certain words that others or certain expressions. It's not like 100% accuracy translation issue. It's more like we just wanted to make sure that the translation reads well and not paying as much of attention of, like, the linguist preference. So we wanted to basically identify errors that impact the meaning, the tone, or the usability.

So we wanted to make sure that the translations that we have already completed were accurate, were clear, and they have the appropriate cultural fit.

So we got a third vendor involved with this translation or quality translation process. So we wanted to have a third person look at the materials that we have already translated and also look at the audio recordings that they were done with interpreting services to make sure that they were accurate.

So that it was -- that it was a good translation and it was a good interpretation. And if not, we wanted to make sure that we know how we can make sure that we improve those services.

So the translation review is essential for high-stake content affecting safety, health, or legal compliance. We will to select documents that we wanted to have reviewed. And when selecting those documents obviously we have a high volume of translations. We couldn't select all the translations that we have performed so far but we decided to go and select materials that had more high-stakes content. Also materials that are more long-lasting, like, for example, income guidance, those are types of materials and fliers that we use every year that they are being revised because there's new income guidelines. But we decided to choose this type of material because we thought that they were going to be more relevant for the quality assurance process.

Also complex special or technical content that require precision, we thought they would be most appropriate for this initiative. And materials being more for vulnerable or under-served population or other materials that have more content. These are some ideas and documents that you might be interested in reviewing in your organization because they have the most impact. When we decided to look for a third vendor we wanted to make sure obviously it was a qualified vendor and as you -- some of you might know if you work with the state, we have some translation and interpretation organizations that are listed as with the state contracts. So we pulled one of those

vendors and we just reach out to them and see if they could produce these quality assurance piece. We wanted to make sure that they had professional translators with relevant expertise and relevant subject matter, that they had native or, you know, near-native fluency in target language. They had a deep understanding of the target audiences. And that they had also strong digital literacy and file management skills because these initiatives also involve changing documents and making sure that they can provide us notes about the issues that they found.

So the person who is doing this quality assurance has to be also well-knowledged about digital literacy and understand how to use Word documents and things like that. And then also perhaps they need to have if they work with CAT tools that would be important for someone that is involved in the quality assurance process.

So in this slide I tried to put together the steps that we took for us to complete these quality assurance process. So we started as I mentioned earlier and I'll be sharing also a list of the materials. We started preparing the materials. So what I did, was, again, go through the list of translated materials that we have performed at DMAS with our vendor, and then select the ones that we thought were going to be most impactful for our audience to make sure that they were accurately translated.

We also when we met with the third vendor, we wanted to set clear expectations. We wanted to make sure that they had the correct instructions to work on this project, and we defined the scope so we reached out to the vendor and said this is what we want to do, we have these documents, we want to make sure that linguists review it and let us know the level of accuracy, we also had to inform them because as you may know if you work with translators, that sometimes linguists, they don't necessarily know your program.

In our case we were with Medicaid health insurance, and sometimes linguists they don't know about these programs. They also sometimes work in other countries where Medicaid doesn't exist. So we also had to define who -- what is Medicaid and what are the programs so that linguists when they were reviewing the materials they had a little bit more background about what our program was.

And then we just performed the review. Once the linguists had the clear expectations on what they had to do, they performed their review, and I will share a little bit more later on on how they provided us their feedback in regards to their review process. And then the last step on this high-level process was to implement the changes. So if there were some issues or red flags that were raised by the

linguists, we wanted to make sure that we went through all those and see what we could do in order to address if those were very critical issues.

So this is a little bit of a high-level overview of the steps that we took. And on this slide I wanted to show you this is basically the list of documents and the list of recordings that we provided our vendors. So I collected all the materials and with an Excel spreadsheet I listed the documents that we were going to share with the linguists so that they could review for quality. So, for example, as you can see, some of these titles for documents might sound a little strange to you but the ABD flyer is a very common flyer that we utilize here at DMAS about the age, blind and disabled population. It has very important information about the program. So we thought that that would be a very relevant document to have reviewed.

And we also have the adult flyer which also has income guidelines. And for all these documents we have listed we listed ten of them, we included the different translations. So, for example, there is a particular IRS form that we work with, we share with our linguists the Arabic translation but also the Amharic and the Vietnamese and Urdu translation of that form so they can let us know if there's any issues with the translation accuracy. Other documents we have listed here was the famous brochure which is another program that Medicaid works all the time, and then some one-pagers.

We also provided final agency decisions. As mentioned earlier, we provide translations for hearings and when there's a final appeal decision that the appellant needs translated we also provide those translations so we wanted to see how those translations were done, especially like this one was translated into Amharic and Jesus and I don't have any experience with Amharic so we wanted to make sure that translation was well-done. We had other documents related to the spend-down closure notices we send to our members, definitely something we wanted to make sure was accurately translated and also that would draw letter.

And on the right side of the slide we have listed here also the materials that we submitted that they were audio materials because as I mentioned the quality assurance translations but also interpretations. At DMAS we use phone interpretation services and most of the time it's being used for appeals hearings. And those are recorded. So we sent to our third-party vendor we send ten recordings, all of them were approximately an hour each. And it was a recording of a hearing with the appellant and with the interpreting services.

So we want to make sure that we would get feedback about

how that interpretation was being done. Some of the hearings were in Amharic as it shows on the slide. Some were done in Korean, Urdu, Arabic, as you can see, a wide variety of languages because that's the wide variety of languages that our Medicaid members speak and communicate so we thought it was important for that. I wanted to speak a little bit about the review guidelines. This was a piece of information that we agreed with our vendor. And this was initiated for this third-party vendor.

They send us a document with instructions that they were planning to share with their linguists. As you can see from what we have described, there were different linguist, probably like 15 or 20 involved in this project because we had so many different vendors so when the linguist was sharing with them they had a guideline, a comprehensive brief of what their clients were looking for. So we included the scope of the review and then we it is included information about the client, who we are, what programs we work for, we also shared important links so that linguists if they wanted to get a little more background or more information, they could access them at their own.

Then we also share better target audience and who are intended recipients are. Also we provided the linguists the step-by-step instructions what they had to do and how they had to mark if there were any issues with the translations and the protocol they had to complete if they had any questions so they could reach out to us, the client, or they could reach out to their Program Manager if they had any questions about the project. And finally the deliverables. We wanted to make sure we were all on the same page as far as what we needed as the final piece. And I'll be sharing with you all how that deliverable piece looked like.

So the important piece of the project was to identify integrity. It is easy for us to tell the vendor this is a document that has already been translated, can you tell us if it's good or if it's bad. But then the linguist and the vendor they needed to have a little bit more of an explanation of what could translation is or bad translation is, right?

So we defined different error categories and we wanted each linguist to tell us for each translation and each recording what type of error categories they found.

So, for example, we defined we wanted to make sure that if there was an error or an issue with accuracy of the translation, for example, maybe the translation missed an important part of the original or the English source document. So if they found an issue with accuracy, they had to classify that issue as accuracy. Or maybe if they found an issue that

related to different units of measurement or maybe the address in the translation was not displayed correctly, we wanted them to let us know that it was local convention issue. Or perhaps it was related to the style and register or the fluency. Maybe there were issues that could be found related to grammar or maybe awkward phrasing or maybe the terminology, the use of the terminology was not consistent or was not accurate. Or perhaps the layout, how the document looked and how the fonts displayed.

So when we gave them the instructions, we wanted to make sure that if they found issues that they could tell us under which category each issue was related to. We thought that would be very helpful for us to understand.

And then we also wanted them to let us know the severity level of that issue. Because that was going to help us with at the end of the project determine what were the next steps, right?

So obviously for us, we definitely needed to know if there were any critical issues with the translation or with the interpretation that was already performed because it was -- if it was very critical we needed to do urgent remediation actions with that material. So, for critical we also had to define what critical meant. And for us the critical was something that fundamentally changes the meaning, impacts the safety or the legal compliance of the information that the original document says.

So if it's something critical, it needs to be addressed right away, and we wanted to linguists to let us know the error severity. For major we defined the linguist could let us know it was major. Major we defined significantly affects the clarity and accuracy. It's obviously not as bad as critical but it's something we would need to address. And then they could also let us know if they found minor issues like maybe small grammar or punctuation concerns that they found, those are also important so we also wanted to know. And also like if there was maybe issues that they found in regards to preferential and that goes to, you know, maybe the differences in the word choice. Maybe the translator used a particular word and the reviewer considered that that word was not as accurate or as good.

So if it's something related to preference of wording we wanted them to let us know. And lastly, if it's a repeated issue which sometimes happens if a particular word is wrongly translated, most likely it repeats in other parts of the text. So we also wanted to make sure they would explain and let us know if that was a repeat issue.

So after we define the task, the categories and the

critical issues, this is what we have here on the screen was the final -- well, it's a screen shot of the final product that we wanted them to send back to us. And I'm going to describe what we can see on the screen.

So what we wanted to make sure is that the linguists if they found any issues we wanted to make sure within this table that we provided them with error location and those are the titles of the columns.

The source text, the original translation, for example, the error location it was very important for us to know where to locate that error if they found an error. So they were supposed to include the name of the document. As I showed earlier, we had titles on the documents.

So they just had to reference the title of the document, and share the page if it was a multi-page document.

The source text, this is -- I don't know if you have been involved with validation for translations for quality assurance but it is important when we are reviewing what issues are happening, it is very important for us, okay, what does the English say? Right? If there's an issue with the translation, fine, but we want to know first what does the source text say so that then we can evaluate how was the translation performed.

So the other column is the original translation. So we wanted to make sure that the linguists, they would paste the original translation that was provided to us, right? And if there was an issue that they found we wanted them to include the suggested translation.

So these two columns are slightly different because one is how it was translated and the other explains how the linguist considered should have been translated to be accurate.

And then we wanted them as mentioned earlier we wanted them to classify what type of category the issue that was found. And they even also had subcategories. For example, like the fluency category that we described before, if it was something particularly related to the grammar they could include that. And then the column about the severity, that's where they had to tell us if it's a minor issue or if it's a major one. Again, when we receive all these deliverables, we went through first all the major issues to determine what we were going to do next. Obviously we needed to remediate that translation right away. We did, right?

So lastly, a very important column is the reviewer's comment. I don't know if you have experienced that but sometimes someone can tell you, oh, no, this translation is not accurate; it should say this. But if it's written in Arabic, I don't know what this is. So it's super helpful to make sure the linguist provides an explanation. For example, for the

major issue that we have on the screen, the linguist explained phone is separated from translation, it's a fluency issue. This is two-sentence paragraph but divided in the wrong way and got mixed. So with that explanation it was very helpful for us to understand the issue and then determine if it's major, if it needs to be addressed, and how we can improve that for the next one.

So this is, again, a screen shot of one of the deliverables for one of the documents. But we had this deliverable for each of the interpretations and for each of the documents that were translated.

So it was very helpful. Again, we thought all the instructions ahead of time and all the definitions, the linguists would not have known how to perform the deliverables that we were looking for for this particular project. So I want to highlight on this slide some tips for success to have in mind. If you want to be involved in similar quality assurance projects like this in the future, we wanted to highlight to always have present a budget. And if it's something that you want to perform for translations, make sure that you add a 15 to 25% cost to your translation project if this is something that you wants to do ongoing for your translations, you know, there is a cost related to that so keep that in mind.

And then also plan realistic timelines. I'm sure that everyone here has experienced that you start thinking, oh, yeah, this is going to take us two months. You know, one month to clarify instructions, and the second month to implement the project. Things happen. And it's good to know that usually linguists and translation vendors, they typically perform translations within 1 or 2 days. But sometimes we run into issues with languages that are not as common, that perhaps the linguist is working overseas, they don't have the same time that we have. When we are closed they are opened. So having in mind and planning with enough cushion for the time it's always very helpful. And I think this is -- this is true for any project management that you perform similar to that, this works the same way.

Make sure you include ample time to complete the project. And ensure the -- this is an issue we have found with certain languages like Arabic and Amharic sometimes we don't have the funds or the reviewer doesn't have the funds. So make sure that everybody has the right funds to render properly. And then lastly, what we have already discussed, consider the reviewer availability because as mentioned before, maybe the linguist is not available that day so if you need to add another week to perform, that's always helpful to keep in mind.

So these are some tips for success. And then as the last slide, the very important piece is, okay, so we have completed this project so what do we do now with this information? Right? This is something that came to us once we had the project completed, we had all the deliverables, the linguist did an amazing job following our instructions. What do we do with this information?

Well, first of all prioritize the critical issues, that's what I explained before and that's what we decided to do first. So we address -- we review all the deliverables and look for any major errors that we found. And then make sure that we found a couple that we needed to revisit and we went to the original translator or the original vendor that provided us with the translation, and let them know, hey, there's an issue here, what is going on, can we get this corrected? And the same also for interpretation, we noticed that there were a few interpreters that seem not to have based on what was reviewed perhaps they didn't seem to have the right vocabulary. Again, these were appeals hearings that are quite technical.

So we also had some comments from linguists about interpretations that they said there were a few drops during the call meaning that the interpreter was interpreting but then all of a sudden the call got dropped and they didn't have an interpreter and they had to call the vendor to get another interpreter. So those were critical issues for us and we wanted to address those with our vendor. It happens. We understand that connection issues can happen. But we wanted to make sure that the vendor was aware since we had the recording and we also had the particular interpreter that completed that recording, that was very helpful. And the vendor was thankful that we raised those concerns because they were able to address them with their linguists.

If it was a quality or an accuracy or not having the correct vocabulary or vendor informed us that they would provide training sessions to their linguists to make sure that they would have that knowledge next time.

So that was as far as prioritizing the critical issues. Then that was the share the quality assurance results is what I was just speaking to right now about how, you know, we reached out to a vendor and how we made sure that they addressed those issues.

And then we also came into questioning, okay, we did now this quality assurance this year but do we want to do more periodic reviews? We thought it was going to be very relevant for the type of work that we do with interpretation and translation services. So we are going to reach out to our leadership team and propose timelines and consider if, you

know, we need to put some budget aside to implement this periodic reviews and determine how often we wanted to perform these periodic reviews because we thought they were very, very effective and very important with the translation work that we do here at DMAS.

And then lastly just always, you know, continuously improve. This project helped us identify and create glossaries and style guides for us that we can share with linguists. So it is always, as Sara was mentioning before it is always constant improvement on projects and initiatives related to language and disability access to making sure that our communications are fully and meaningfully accessible.

So that was the last slide that we had. And now I just can't wait to hear from Kahlil and Christina during our panel discussion. We have defined 7 or 8 questions I think. But I want to get them on board and join me during this discussion because I know that they have done so much work with quality assurance and I want to hear from them how they have or how do they implement quality assurance for their organizations.

So let me bring them -- Kahlil and Christina, maybe Kahlil, if you want to start introducing yourself and providing us a little background on your agency. And then we can move to Christina and then go through the questions that we have for the discussion. So Kahlil, feel free to start and I'll pin you.

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: Sounds great. Thank you so much, Montserrat. And, you know, big cheers for all of the work that you're doing. I many times during your presentation I just wanted to cheer and, you know, say that I second a lot of the work that you're doing.

My name is Kahlil Thomas. My pronouns are he, they, I'm the Language Access quality specialist for the City government of Philadelphia. We are housed in the Office of Immigrant Affairs and our program is called language access Philly. We are a very small program for a very large city. We consist of myself and our director.

And I oversee specifically the quality and accessibility of our services for the entire city. Everything from 911 to the libraries, to the department of records, the quality assurance of that from the city's perspective at least comes to me. And I'm sure I can discuss in great detail the structure of the city and how all of that works. But I'd really like to get more into the meat of the conversation. So I'll pass it to Christina to introduce, and then I think we can get started with the discussion.

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Hello. It is good morning here on the west coast so good morning but good afternoon to

those of you who are in the afternoon time zone. I'm Christina Bonilla-Barboza and I use she and her pronounces. Aim the program access manage at TriMet. We are in Portland, Oregon. We have about 400 square miles of surface area in my district that spans across four different counties. (Speaking quietly). And I am very new to the transportation world. My background is in law enforcement social work but I always tell folks civil rights where ever you're at. So thank you for having me.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Thank you both for being leer today. I'm sure your calendars are very busy and I really appreciate your time.

So yeah, I have as I said I have a few questions. Let's start with the first one. And we can start with Kahlil. So what prompted your agency to begin conducting quality assurance for translations or interpretations, and what goals were you hoping to achieve? So tell us a little bit more about that.

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: Sure. So I came to the City of Philadelphia in 2022 as part of a new project that was really our initial steps as a program into translation quality.

That program was developed by our previous director, Maria Hiraldo (phonetic) and it was in response to a lots of the language access efforts happening during the COVID-19 pandemic. And specifically, you know, there was a lot of public health information, a lot of emergency information that needed to be distributed to our very multilingual community very quickly. And, of course, you know, as I'm sure many of you may have experienced there were a lot of quality issues with that. I can remember one example very explicitly which was a poster that went out in French that said help us to spread COVID-19. You know, just things that were all over the gambit of quality issues.

And so I was brought on at that time for that temporary project, it was a project that spanned one year. And I was brought on because of my background in linguistics and in multi-lingual contact. And so at that time really what our goal was was to establish kind of a baseline standard of quality for the City of Philadelphia for our language access services. And specifically at that time we were focused on what we call our vital services, our vital documents, and our websites.

So kind of the most important contact points for our community we wanted to establish a baseline of quality.

And so a large part of that was establishing what quality is and what quality means for the City of Philadelphia, and setting realistic both expectations and realistic guidelines for what that looks like. (Background noise).

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you. How about for you, Christina, how did your agency get involved with this quality assurance?

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Yeah. So I joined TriMet in November of 2023. And at that time the agency was exploring how they can disseminate multilingual messaging across our area in alerts or advisories for folks that were utilizing public transit to get to where they needed to go. And so (?) the system to help with translation and quickly learned that they weren't getting the results that they wanted or were expecting from the AI translation (poor quality audio) software for a variety of different reasons so I was brought in to support, recalibrate that project. But also worked closely with community partners who worked with communities who speak different languages and see what we can do to best support their engagement with our services. But we also really wanted to create a very welcoming environment for folks and we knew that in doing so we had to provide an environment or create an environment where folks were seen, heard, validated and can navigate our system within their capacities.

And so we wanted to create an environment and a messaging strategy that was multilingual for our community (Away from microphone) not about our community. So in doing so we really thought about same as Kahlil, what is quality, what is accuracy, how do we measure that, who gets to measure that, and when we look at a lens seeing we wants to provide meaningful access (poor audio) so we thought about it should be meaningful to the community and they get to determine what is accurate and what is reflective of the community, their language. And so we really wanted to ensure that was centered on communities in the process of conducting quality issues but engaging in that process for local vendors who hired linguists to working with our community to determine, you know, neutral terminology to some of the vocabulary that communities did use our didn't use.

And so, again, our goal was to create messaging strategies and campaigns for our community and not about them that were easily understood and navigated and that were truly reflective have the cultural nuances in our system.

>> I love that, Christina. I love the portion of getting the community involved. And as I said before, we have used linguists but this linguist is not necessarily live in our communities. They might speak the language but not involved in the services so getting them involved is a great idea and suggestion so thank you for bringing that up. Again, I keep hearing in my presentation I introduce the definition term a lot. And it looks like it is a common terminology definition for the quality assurance project. So tell us a little bit

more how do you define quality in translation and interpretation within your agency? What does quality mean to you? Kahlil, we can start.

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: Yeah. I think Christina kind of started to lean into some of these ideas already, right? In the City of Philadelphia we really liked the idea of quality back to that legal mandate we have to have meaningful services, right?

And so for us we were asking a lot of these same questions, you know, who defines quality, how do we define quality, and, you know something I think we may feel even a little hesitant to say sometimes is that quality is an opinion. You know, it's a point of view. There's not one explicit way to measure quality and say this is quality and that is not.

And so when we started to think about defining quality we really wanted to take a community-centered and a community-owned approach to what that meant. And especially I have a background as a linguist, I speak several languages, but I'm a native English speaker. And so you know for me, there's a bit of a barrier to say that I'm an authority on what the Vietnamese speaking community here needs and what the Thai speaking communities and Spanish speaking community's needs. I can't really speak to what those communities need even if I am familiar enough with the language to review some of the materials.

And so we took the approach of working within our community, as well. We held focus groups in several different languages within the community throughout Philadelphia. And we would bring -- either we would bring an interpreter or I would conduct the focus group myself in that language and bring out these different interpretations that came out of the city and ask people what do you think about this, tell me about this vocabulary, why this is good and why is this bad. My experience as a linguist was able to turn that feedback which at times with feel very vague, this is weird, this doesn't sound right, and translate that into something concrete that our translators and our vendors could use to actually impact their quality.

And so we have established what I call our four pillars of quality in the City of Philadelphia. And these are idealized to make our services meaningful. And meaningful both for the public, for the residents who are using the services but also meaningful for us as the city government who have to rely on these services to make sure our programs are efficient and effective.

And our four pillars are accessibility, right, are services, you know, able to be accessed, are they understandable, are they working? Clarity, so is the message

coming across in a way that people understand, that people can follow the directions? Accuracy, we want to make sure that 100% of the original information is getting into the translated version, no more, no less.

And lastly respect. Right. So do our translations respect both the people who are receiving the services as well as the subject matter of information? Right? If we are writing about a vulnerable community are we respecting that community and respecting the reader, respecting their intelligence, respecting their place in our community.

One last thing I'll say before you turn to it Christina is, you know, I often stress to our vendors that we are working with quote unquote foreign languages but we are not working with foreign people. We are working with our neighbors, we are working with our co-workers, we are working with our friends, our family, our community members.

And so we are always thinking about, you know, these are people who exist in our local context, in our local social sphere, and we want to make sure that we respect that place that they're here, that these are, you know, for the most part Philadelphians who are using our service even if it's in French or Haitian, Creole or Arabic.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: I love the four pillars and the definitions of quality for you. How about for you, Christiana, how would you define quality in translation and interpretation.

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Very similar with Kahlil to the City of Philly. With us we recognize again the quality is subjective so we really wanted to bring in what that really means in our context and also for our community. So for us we wanted to make sure that for us quality was information or translations that are accurate, that are complete, that are culturally appropriate. They're easy for everyone to understand.

And so that really brought us to some of the same outreach and work we did in community as Kahlil, we hosted multiple focus groups to review some of our material with different communities in their target language and we partnered with community organizations that were working within those communities to remove us as a government agency out of the picture so that they could have candid conversations about our work and our materials.

That was really important to us. We didn't want this to be a pressure to say everything was great just because we were sitting in this space and also because we didn't speak those languages that we were hosting focus groups in. So we wanted to make sure that the dialogue was as natural as possible without having interruptions so we did have focus groups, some

were recorded so that we can transcribe just to make sure we were getting an accurate representation of what was shared.

We also took a step back and really thought about when you think about quality meaningful access who is utilizing our service and who is dependent on our service. So we worked our way out and that led us to working with our school districts with the newcomer programs, PTO's of different communities, we worked with English language community programs in the community. We were intentional about who we reached out to ensuring that we reached out to those that were impacted by inaccurate translations or the lack of access. And I'm looking at my notes.

Within the cultural context one of the processes that was initiated was we met with communities who didn't use language in different ways -- in addition to communication. Specifically communities (poor audio) here in Oregon and our service area, terminology we used in the past was (?) which was not our intention. So we worked with the communities to say, hey, what are some neutral terms that we could use that would be appropriate for you and for you? This is our service so what is it we can do and how can we communicate in a way that is good for both parties and we as an agency are aligning ourselves politically. So that also led into working and reaching out to other communities to say what are the different forms of communication or terminology that you use within our community and that led us to outlining original preferences again, on language, as well.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Excellent. Excellent response. So it is a very clear to me that quality, it is very hard to define and it is very subjective, but we have to produce the type of work related to making sure that it's a qualifying or qualified translation.

So yeah, thank you for your insight on the definition of this important term, "quality" and what it means for each of you.

And I know that we have already shared some examples on focus groups particularly for methods used, but are there any other specific methods or tools that your agency uses to review translations or interpretation services? Some examples that we have heard peer review or back translation or bilingual staff review or client feedback or vendor scoring forms. Do you have any particular method that you use, that you prefer, let us know which ones. So Kahlil, if you want to start.

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: Absolutely. We use a very kind of mixed methods approach to quality review, especially given that we have a lot of different projects and needs and audiences throughout the city.

And so we rely on a lot of different things based on context. At a very broad level we have created a standard style guide that is used by all of our translation vendors and we also have along with that a standardized multilingual glossary that we developed with our community with feedback. We had community organizations review that. And so those are used by all of our translations vendors and they must use those resources when producing translating material for us. They are updated on an annual basis based on resident feedback, based on new research, based on even vendor feedback. We allow the vendors and translators to give feedback. We need both the experts in the language and the experts in the community to all be in dialogue to be able to produce those tools.

I always create materials for employees within the city who are responsible for using those services whether it's on the phone, whether it's ordering a translation, things for them to be able to, for example, if I am not a Chinese speaker or I'm not a Hindi speaker or, you know, I can't read the translation that's put in front of me, what are some steps I can take beforehand before I send our my source document to make sure I'm getting the best out of my translator possible.

And then also what are some steps I can take after my translation comes back to me, even if I don't read the language, how can I kind of look over things and see, you know, okay, do things look right, do, you know, things appear correctly on my page? And other considerations that you can take at those times.

Right now we are developing programming for multilingual city employees to be able to give additional feedback on both translation and interpretation services. Our multilingual employees are our expertise gold mine in that they know the language and they know the community and they, you know, you don't stop being part of the Philadelphia community just because you have a city badge.

But they also understand our institution and understand what we are trying to do, what we are trying to say and how we are trying to sound. So we are developing resources for them to be able to do better evaluations as well.

And something I'll plug here that I'll definitely make sure I sure with you, Montserrat, is a lot of the resources and things that we produce here in the City of Philadelphia we publish under a creative commons license so this means that other organizations can take those resources like our style guide, like some of these resources for our city employees, and you can repurpose them and reuse them or distribute them the way you want to in your organization and in your work.

We don't ask for, you know, payment or we are not going to

come after you for copy right. We produce these for free because we want these materials to spread. And we also want you to adapt them to what is happening locally in your community.

I can make decisions that I think are the right decisions for Philadelphia but I don't live all over the country, I live right here in my community. So I encourage people to take our resources into their own organizations and institutions and practices, and repurpose them and reuse them and reevaluate them with their community in mind.

>> MONTISERRAT SERRA: Yeah. I love it. Thank you, Kahlil, for your generosity. Maybe after the event I can get that link if you feel comfortable sharing, and I have a last slide on this presentation with resources so I'll definitely add it to this resources.

But yeah, maybe I got it from your link but it's been recent that Jesus and I we decided to create a style guide and that it was about time. And for the style guide there's words that cannot be translated like sometimes acronyms some linguists translate and others keep it the same. It's important to have that tool as you explain defining the terminology, defining what words need to be translated. Medicaid, for example, some linguists decide they want the translate it whereas our linguists don't translates Medicaid. So those tools are very, very helpful. And thank you for sharing that information and for sharing those tools with that link. I'm sure a lots of people in the audience would be interested in see those.

How about for you, Christina, any particular methods or maybe tools that you use as well?

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Yeah, we also use a wide variety of different tools and methods to evaluate and review our interpretations services. We do use peer review, we do have community feedback groups. We also have a space where folks with e-mail or call and let us know if there's an inaccurate translation anywhere in our system. I'm very hesitant to engage bilingual staff only because we don't compensate our staff with bilingual skills so I want to be very cognizant and transparent about the emotional labor, the actual labor and equities that engage staff to review materials to have when they're not being compensated even though they are. So recognizing we don't compensate staff for bilingual skills. I'm very hesitant. There are things I want to help, please involve me and so forth. So when possible specifically when we are utilizing or creating any vital documents or information we want to make sure that staff has the opportunity and if they choose to do so.

We also do vendor score forms. We score our vendors based on how they certify their interpreters, the education and experience required to be an interpreter for that agency, and the work, and if they're, you know, a local vendor or they're a national vendor so we do have a scoring matrix that I developed to allow us to see how our vendors are engaging in this process to ensure we are getting the most accurate translations. We don't certify interpreters. We rely on the vendors for that but we want to see how that process is for them. We are careful about using back translation. If the translation is inaccurate to begin with, the back translation will be inaccurate. We ask to allow us to download -- so we can compare the translations among vendors to ensure consistency.

We created style guides in our top five target languages. They're in the target language and in English so that the vendor can see both. So they can read it in Chinese. And they also have our style guide and our brand guide that we share with our vendors. We are working on getting those translated as well. We also create a list of do not translate words. And we also create a list of words like, hey, if you see the word writer in Spanish used as a verb use this. If it's a noun, use this. So when create that so folks don't have to guess what we are trying to say. And if they're guessing, we are not relaying information very well in English, either. We also try to ensure that (poor audio) to go to our linguists for translation.

And then again we also do spot-checks of ourselves and tell the community the different feedback, focus groups, outreach and ask for their feedback to compensate (?)

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Yeah. Very great information. I'm writing so many notes. (Chuckles).

Yeah. Like, I completely agree with the glossary and the tools to make sure -- because we find it all the time, too. Sometimes we received translations and it's letters that we send to members, and sometimes the linguists, they translate the address on the letter, and that letter has to go through the postal mail. And if we translated into Arabic, the postal mail will not know what is the correct address. So those are such important tools to have defined.

So yeah, very thankful for this information.

So the next one is about you have already mentioned some challenges. In particular with the bilingual staff I also agree they're an amazing resource because they know the program so well that in our case at DMAS if we ask them for assistance we to have make sure we reach out to their supervisors. And they have other functions to do and complete at the agency.

So you want to make sure you don't over-step that.

Are there any other challenges besides that that you have encountered when trying to assess or improve translations or interpretation quality, and how have you addressed them?

Kahlil, if you want to start.

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: I'll speak to that and one thing I'll say is I put it in the chat but I wholeheartedly agree something that I have always said in our program is language skills are professional skills, language labor is professional labor. As part of our work in language access accessibility we have a rule that allows us to pay City employees \$25 an hour for special projects and language access. And we work very hard to make sure that our multilingual employees have that.

I think the large thing we talked about is defining quality can are very subjective. I think at the same time it's not impossible. It's something that we do have an ability to do. And so, you know, it's important for us as well to be the ones to make that decision. I think all of our vendors and our different providers have quality assurance procedures and quality assurance metrics. You know a lot of times those don't necessarily speak to what we are talking about when we bring quality within our community. And it's not our vendor jobs for mind readers, it's our job to help build the bridge so that they can meet our community's needs.

We have had to really create our own standards of quality, and really our own mechanisms to enforce that quality. I think another challenge that we have faced is that we are tasked with compliance to make sure that all of our programs meet the legal requirements for language access.

But we don't really have, you know, a compliance mechanism, you know. We are not a punishment-based program. We are a solutions-based program. So a lots of times that takes a little bit more investigation, a little more listening, and working with the system to be able to devise a solution. I typically tell people that 99% of people who work with within the City of Philadelphia they are helpful people, they care about our residents, they care about being efficient, they care about being effective. So for most of them if they can snap their fingers and a human interpreter showed up every time they a multilingual encounter they are probably would do it. And a lot of times what ends up being the quality service issue is somewhere along the way there was a miscommunication, there was an issue or, you know, someone maybe dropped a detail.

But we work very closely to kind of investigate and do I would say targeted interventions into things.

So I'll give kind of like a case study which was we were having a lot of trouble with getting translations into Arabic

and Swahili specifically for materials that dealt with the LGBTQ community. We were getting feedback from our vendor that translators were uncomfortable, they didn't want to translate the material and it was really prolonging a lots of our translation timeline. And, you know, this is a subject that I take a little bit personally so I was a little shocked to hear that, you know, maybe we had some kind of prejudice or something going on with our translators. But I took a step back, you know, took a breath and asked our vendor would the translators be willing to have a focus group and talk about what this issue is? So I ended up having a focus group with several of these translators and asked them what is going on, why is everyone uncomfortable to translate this material? And one of the translators spoke up and she said I'm an Arabic translator, I'm very professional, I'm trained in this from Egypt, I've been doing this for 20 years. I don't ever any training on how to do LGBTQ topics in a way that is respectful in a way that is going to be respectful of your culture and in a way that it's going to make sense for your audience.

And so I understand this is a sensitive topic, I understand this is something that requires extra care and expertise that I don't have. And so I choose to pass on these assignments.

Because I want to make sure that it goes to someone who can do a good job.

And several of the other translators agreed. A light bulb went off in my head, I understand this isn't prejudice, this is professionalism. This is exactly what I want in my translators for my organization. So can I help you set up a glossary, can I go back to the community to go back and develop guidelines for our style guide and come back and see if you'll feel more comfortable in engaging with these topics. They said yeah, I would love that, I would love a glossary of terms and guidance how I can approach this because I can't get that here where I live in Egypt. So we continue to make those kinds of targeted interventions. And, you know, sometimes it's an issue with your translator, sometimes it's an issue with graphic design. Sometimes it's an issue with the office who created the source document.

We try to take each incident and identify where in that pathway the issue came up and said how can we come here and support so that it goes smoothly next time.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Wow, very illustrative example and I love that communication part because sometimes we working with -- I mean projects in general you just fall into assumptions. And especially with translations we go back because sometimes we receive validation projects where they to have evaluate how the translation final product looks like.

And sometimes they make comments but we don't understand. And we could just let it pass. But we don't want to let it pass unless we understand something is wrong. And the cultural aspect you were just illustrating is so important and finding the right solution to making them feel comfortable. So very illustrative example, thank you for showing us that challenge.

How about you, Christina, do you find any particular challenges that you would like to go over?

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Sure. We have come across the same cultural challenges, identities as Kahlil. Also for us we have push back from our vendors. Why, why do you think that or why should we use this terminology and have that align with our style guide or our how does that respond and relate to the community so that we want to make sure we are refocusing back to community.

So often times we have had situation where's the vendor may not agree with the terminology the community is using because it's grammatically incorrect. And when you enter a grammatically incorrect sentence in our memory, our translation memory, then it's going to be incorrect moving forward, right? And that can lead to a domino effect of other issues grammatically or so forth.

Also, you know, we as a public agency we are not willing to say out loud when we are wrong or when we are the problem. One of our challenges has been that, you know, we could not support our vendors and only with improving translation quality, we are not setting them up for success. If we are just doing something, there's no context, there's no source document, you know, we work a lot on construction projects. And construction terminology is very different than medical terminology and court terminology and so forth.

And, you know, we are having (?) by engineers which is great and we spent too much money or a lot of money learning how to write well, and I'm asking you now to, you know, write this in plain language, bring down the readability level of this document for the community because they're not experts, they're not experts in construction. And that's really not our target audience. So some of the challenges that we have been facing is reminding our staff who are creating the documents who the target audience is and ensuring that it's, you know, in plain language or easy to understand and that it's clear. And also with that we also learned that some of our communities may have verbal or spoken proficiency in their native language but they're literacy levels are extremely low in their target language. So often times as much as we want to provide good translation, if they're unable to read in their native language as well, we have to look at other ways to get translated

information out to folks whether it's audio, you know, something that's friendly or what not. So that's been an issue as well as we have communities also that have colloquial languages and there's no keyboard for that language that we can assess. So how do we relay information. And also just ensuring that we hold our vendors to the standard, right, that we set out in our contracts. We had some issues before with style guides and glossaries and what not. If it's not working it's not working. Just being able to name that and have that candid conversation with vendors about, like, what is not working or what are the recurring issues that we are seeing that really impact the quality of our translated materials. And putting that type of quality standards with the contract prior to proceeding with work with the vendors.

And so it was very challenging on both ends.

And also, you know, we as a nation ask vendors how are we to work with? How are we as clients? And really hoping that we get, you know, feedback from our vendors about how we are as clients for them. And that can also be very challenging as a public agency to have egg on our face. So how do we go forward?

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Yeah, yeah, very good point. And yeah, sometimes like for us we try to get together with our vendor like once a year and go over what is working, what is not working, what we can do better. So yeah, that's also a challenge making sure that the vendors do what is expected but unless you communicate to them what you're expecting, it's not going to happen.

So thank you. Thank you for sharing those important challenging points that you have run into.

Then we move to the next question. And we have a few more. Maybe we have gone through some of them already. How do you ensure that feedback from peer reviews leads to actual improvement in vendor performance or internal processes? I don't think we have touched on that one.

For you, Kahlil, how do you perform that or ensure that feedback is performed back into the agency?

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: I think that something I always stress at the very beginning of, you know, the process is you have to encourage feedback. You have to make sure you're actually reaching out to your community and asking, hey, how do you feel about this? Provide avenues for them to give feedback.

Sometimes I think we make it a little difficult to give feedback. And I think sometimes even institutionally we become afraid of feedback. And I like to encourage people to take the opposite approach. You know, I think if all language access was positive and perfect I won't have a job as the quality

coordinator.

My job is not to make sure that there's never a quality issue again. My job is to be the person who is here and responsive and responsible when quality issues arise.

And so I often tell our offices and I tell our vendors if we are giving you more feedback even if the feedback is negative, don't see it as a bad thing, see it as a good thing. It's an opportunity for us to improve and actually make sure the services we are offering are working and are meaningful.

And then it's, you know, after those avenues are opened, really engaging with that feedback. I think all of us as people who use languages, you know, we understand that sometimes things sound weird, sometimes a word feels wrong, sometimes a tone or something nuanced can feel disrespectful.

And so my job is to show up and take us from a nuanced idea of what is wrong and turn it into something very concrete.

So I can go back to our vendor and say, hey, I have concrete direct ask of you.

I'm not going to necessarily go back to my vendor and say, hey, someone thought this web page was weird.

I'll do that, you know, if that's what is necessary for a project, but if my goal is to, you know, create actual improvement lasting improvement I need to go back to my vendor and say here's a resource so that you can do better.

Just like I said with our city employees, I also think all of our vendors wants to do a good meaningful job in language access. We need to give them the support that they need to be able to get there so that they feel confident in delivering us a product we are confident in.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Exactly. Thank you. Thank you, Kahlil.

How about for you, Christina, how do you implement that feedback in your organization?

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Very similar to Kahlil, one of the major differences is something that he may not have shared was we -- so I ask and download our vendors translation memory of the work that they have done for us. So I run those translation memories and compare them to ensure that there's that consistency, accuracy, how they utilize the terminology and the area that each is based on our community feed feedback, staff feedback or feedback from others who have come across our materials. We also try to make sure that when we are making corrections in our software that we are tracking the edits and the reasoning behind that we are directly into our system so that we can compare the translation quality from when we make or incorporate feedback to the feedback so we can see over a period of time there's been inconsistent errors within that

sentence or that paragraph or that information.

For us it's a bit different. I don't know if it's easier but we are a transportation agency, there's only so many ways you can say the train is going to be late. We want to make sure we are doing that consistently. It's not where folks in a medical setting. It's dependent upon the client receiving the service in that moment. So for us it's just something that we ensure that feedback is incorporating.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Just it takes time to relay that feedback, but it shows that we care, right? We just received translations and we notice something is wrong, what is the point of not addressing that? Because we are going to see it happening again. And it takes time, it takes courage, to perhaps share negative feedback. But it has to be done. And that shows that you care for what you're doing and you want to make sure that it's done correctly now and moving forward. Yeah. I completely agree.

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Montserrat, I want to add to that. I also share the translation memory that I download from each vendor with all the other vendors so everyone has the same information for us so they can also compare and review how our other vendors are doing the work. Because we have vendors that we contract through for language services so just wanted to put that in, as well.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: That's very interesting. We usually use one vendor, but sometimes, you know, we have thought about using additional ones. And that's such a great idea to download that memory so that other vendors can have that basis of translations. That's a very great concept.

Excellent.

So I know that we have a few -- let me see -- we have a few more questions. I think we can still fit them in.

So I think for number six, so how do you balance quality assurance efforts with time and budget constraints? I think this is a very important one that I don't want to miss.

I spoke a little bit in our presentation as important tips to having to consider budget and time but how do you guys manage that balance in your organizations?

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: I'll say we definitely advocate for setting aside resources for that practice, and I'll just be transparent why I have a job is because the City of Philadelphia decided to set aside some permanent resources and budgeting for that.

At the same time I also have to be very transparent and I think transparency with your community is extremely important about our budget constraints, about our capacity constraints

within our language program. It's only two people for a very large city.

And so, you know, I always say that quality is not a destination, it's a practice. There's not ever going to be an end to quality needs in our language access services. And so I don't ever set as a goal to finalize language access quality (Background noise).

I think to link into what you were just saying, our goal is to be present and to respond in a solution-oriented way with integrity, with transparency, when service issues arise.

And so I think there's a certain level of being honest with ourselves and honest with our community about those constraints.

And what I'll also say is, you know, because we serve our community with so much transparency, with so much integrity, we make a lot of community friends and community allies who in turn are able to advocate more for us, right? If I go to Philadelphia city council and I say hey we need more money for language access, they kind of expect that a language nerd in the language access program thinks we need more money. When our community says we had like to expand it, it has a different impact.

And so that for us is our avenue for maybe addressing some of those constraints. And at the same time you know we have to prioritize the work that we do and say sometimes that it's a greater priority than another and sometimes we have to be honest with our community and say, hey, this is as far as we can take it because it's out of my purview, it's out of my budget, it's not related to my office but here's what I'll do to support you and to support language access moving forward.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Excellent. Budget is always, always an issue with government programs but we got to fight for it, yeah, especially get the public involved since it impacts them, as well.

How about for you, Christina, how you manage that balance with budget and quality assurance?

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Yeah, we do our best, right. (Chuckles). There's always room for improvement. One of the things that we try to stress in our agency is that, you know, we have to think about translation and interpretation at the forefront of project planning, not at the end. And really ensuring that we are allocating specific budgets for translation interpretation and outreach. And so that we are able to see the whole cost of the projects and including that language support at the beginning and not, again, as an afterthought. Also capacity. I'm a team of one. I do have some other folks on my team within my office and so I move fast

so we really knowing that, you know, transition is not perfect, it is a task manager for us, but we have been working really hard building that memory in translation software so it doesn't just pull there language models but filters through our style guides, our do not translate words, our community feedback, our translated material in our web page. And so we have really beefed up that software to help support some of our translations or anything that is vital information or vital document we do have people do that work. And we do have a community feedback loop. But that does take time. So sometimes we are within days of something good to go or because folks don't plan ahead or, you know, well that's going to cost more money now because now you're paying rush fees. Had you thought about this three months ago when we were drafting this poster we could have had that work done ahead of time and several hundred dollars less for that.

And we also have guidance for our staff, you know, most of our vendors have a specific requirement like 200 words or more, you know. And so anything under 200 words that's not vital we do run it through our software for translation and we do have other community members or vendors, community organizations that are in a consultant role for us and have that reviewed.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Yeah. I'm just so impressed the amount of work, that Christina, you do with just one other person and the same for you, Kahlil, I'm not sure how many more people join you in your unit. But it's impressive all the work that is needed and that you manage to do it. I know we spoke in the past with translation, automated translations being done and the community involvement to review that. So planning ahead means a lot but also having very qualified individuals in the language access role is very important, as well.

Well, thank you, very much. I think I'm just going to jump into the last question which usually I like to look into the future, right? And since we have a large audience, what practices looking ahead would you recommend to our audience that would strengthen statewide consistency in translation and interpretation or quality assurance or what last words would you bring to the table to encourage everyone to get involved with this type of initiative like quality assurance for translations and interpretation? What last words do you guys have? And we have like six more minutes so if you can keep it in a minute as last words. (Chuckles).

>> KAHLIL THOMAS: Perfect. I would say number one, you know, events and programming like this is so important. Share, share, share. And this is one reason why the work I do in language access Philly is so important to me is, you know, once upon a time I was a little 18-year-old linguist in linguistics

101 learning a new language for the first time. It frustrates me some of the things I was learning back then is still not here. My job is to share with you. Language is my expertise but everyone here has expertise in something in some way that supports the work that we are doing. I'm not the only one and my kind of expertise is not the only kind. So I would say share, share, share. I would also say, you know, work with your community. Your community is your biggest ally in terms of quality. And that has made all of the difference in terms of the reach of language access Philly here in our community. But like I said before, I can't tell everyone what to do in every community. Your community can tell what you to do in your community. And they will be very explicit, I promise.

And lastly, I would say continue to feel empowered. This is something that can feel scary and can feel like a big weight but it's something that we are all capable of doing especially if we are working together there can be no barriers to how far we can push these services.

So thank you for inviting me today and I'll pass to Christina.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you, Kahlil.

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Great points, Kahlil. Don't want to add much to that. Kahlil did a really good job rounding that out. I would say ask for help. Talk to folks who are doing the work alongside you. There is national, like, language access network that folks can participate in. TriMet we host and convene for the west coast, Oregon, our area. We meet with like-minded folks. To the extent possible share your resources, you know, with others, you know. We share our (?) to help with the continuity of language. And know that you're not in it alone. There's an entire village behind you. And sometimes folks do want to be helpful but we just don't know what you want unless you ask. So thank you for having me.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. And with that last ask I know that I've been looking at the chat. I didn't see any specific questions. Jesus, is that true? Is there any -- I think we still have a few more minutes. Have you seen any questions from the audience?

>> JESUS PEREZ: Yeah, Montserrat, we have some questions and some comments, too.

>> MONTSERRAT SERRA: If you want to go just through the questions to see if we can address a few. We have a couple minutes.

>> JESUS PEREZ: Yes. I will start reading the questions in order of appearance. So the first question was from Katie (phonetic) and she asked if could you talk about the cost of the third vendor review?

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Definitely. I think it was in the ballpark of the 3,000 or 4,000, that's the cost for scope of work that I share with the translation. To review I think it was ten documents of 2 or three pages each. And one hour of hearing recordings which total ten hours total.

So just to give you a ballpark, it was around those numbers.

>> JESUS PEREZ: Good. Thank you. And Kelly Grech (phonetic), I don't know if I'm pronouncing the last name correctly. If not I'm very sorry. Kelly asked: Why not require your vendors to provide proof of training in language proficiency on demand? And she added many hospital systems require other vendors random products of vendors is ideal. And I referred a message from Kelly saying that I pronounced her last name correctly. So that's her question.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: I'm not sure... Christina, Kahlil?

>> CHRISTINA BONILLA-BARBOZA: Yeah, I can start this one off. Our vendors and our scoring matrix that we have. So we do ask our vendors for their process of scoring, qualifications. That's why we have our matrix to link them. Some of the vendors require two years' experience, right, in the industry. Some require some experience or a certification. Some require no experience. Some require testing only. Some require or some just say self-identification a bi-lingual. We do have a nonprofit in Oregon who is working with the court and the medical field here to provide some form of certification for individual languages of central and South America and creating that framework. So we do require that but again we are also relying on the vendors to do their own screening and background work to ensure that they have the level of skills that they say they do. Oftentimes it's not an issue and oftentimes it's very obvious that maybe one of the vendors used Google translate and sent over the documents. Hopefully that answered your question.

>> MONTSEERRAT SERRA: Excellent, Christina. And I know, Jesus, there's a few more questions you mentioned that we have. But what we will have to do because we have passed 3:00, we will just put them together and reach out to our panelists for their answers and we will be sharing that with the audience.

So thank you, everyone, for being here today. A special thank you to Kahlil and Christina for all the knowledge that you have shared. Again, we are all in the same boat. We are all trying to learn from each other. I've never been in such an amazing community where we all support everyone with all what we do in regards to language and disability access. Thank you, Jesus, for helping out with the technical and questions and thank you, Sara, for your amazing opening keynote. And

thank you, the audience. Thank you, everyone, for joining us. It shows that there's so much interest out there about language and disability access programs and it makes me happy that everyone wants to learn something new.

I appreciate everybody's time and we will be in touch. I'll be sharing the recording and the presentation and the answers to the questions that we have and able to address. Thank you to the ASL interpreters also and the person that is transcribing. Thank you so much. Have a wonderful afternoon. Bye-bye.

(Webinar concluded at 3:03 p.m. ET).

(Real-time captioner signing off)

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