

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: December 28, 2023

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Joe Lamers, Director, Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance
Jacqueline Bobo, Chief Information Officer, Department of Administrative Services

Subject: From the Director, Office of Strategy, Budget, and Performance, and the Chief Information Officer, Department of Administrative Services, providing an Informational Report regarding options for translation services available to Milwaukee County departments.

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

This informational report is in response to a request to provide a report outlining potential options to equip departments with the necessary resources/training to provide public information, forms, websites, and other communications in relevant languages, upon request, to residents with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

POLICY

Per Milwaukee County Board [file 23-833](#): “A resolution requesting the Project Management Office in the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance to collaborate with the Department of Administration - Information Management Services Division (DAS-IMSD) to explore and implement, if feasible, options to equip county departments with the necessary resources/training to provide public information, forms, websites, and other communications in Spanish, Hmong, and other relevant languages, upon request, to residents with Limited English Proficiency.”

BACKGROUND

On September 25, 2023, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to request the exploration and implementation of translation services to county departments where feasible. Milwaukee County is home to a diverse population where English may not be someone’s primary language. Spanish is the second most spoken language in the United States, Wisconsin, and Milwaukee and Hmong is the third most spoken language in Wisconsin and Milwaukee. According to the 2022 U.S. Census, in Milwaukee County 17.6% of persons 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home¹.

¹<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/milwaukeecountywisconsin/PST045222>

When there is a need for translation services, Milwaukee County departments work to be responsive. There are many resources and services that departments can utilize to translate information for forms, websites, written materials, etc. The details in the body of this report discuss those resource and services.

BODY

The following resources are available, or will soon be available, to county departments regarding their translation needs:

Website Translation

Google Translate can be used to translate the content on all Milwaukee County webpages. It is a default feature on our website that allows Milwaukee County's content and information to be translated into over 100 languages, including Spanish and Hmong. The feature is located within the footer of every county webpage. This location for Google translate is a common placement with website design.

Multilingual Captioning Services

The Office of the County Clerk and DAS-IMSD have been collaborating to provide technological support to strengthen public access to county meetings and hearings. An opportunity currently being pursued is to provide closed captioning services for streaming public meetings. DAS-IMSD has identified a vendor, Link Electronics, to provide this service. They develop products for both audio and video applications for the broadcast industry. Out of the box, Link's Automatic Captioning Engine (ACE2200/102) hardware and software can caption and translate with 95% accuracy, which can also increase with speaker identification functionality.

The hardware's built-in web-based interface allows the County Clerk's staff to schedule and control the system remotely. Meetings can be scheduled on demand, on an individual basis, or on a repeated schedule. Captioning is done in real-time. Additionally, to further Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, speaker identification allows for increased accuracy with acronyms and complex words.

Link's solution can be integrated with Granicus (Milwaukee County's Legistar/CLIC vendor) for streaming purposes. Milwaukee County currently owns one encoder for English captioning. Each additional language requires its own encoder. Once implementation is fully complete in the first half of 2024, DAS-IMSD will review remaining funds to determine feasibility of purchasing additional encoders. Users can turn off captions in the Granicus Video Player. Due to physical facilities/building requirements, the Link ACE hardware must be located in the same location as encoding equipment. The device can only be used for one meeting at a time. This initiative was part of a previous board submission, [file 23-435](#), and is currently in the contracting process.

DAS-IMSD continues to research the ability for users to remote into the equipment for broadcasting off-site locations and the possibility of multiple devices to support multiple meetings at the same time.

Other Translation Services

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed a more significant need for translation services. Several departments started to work directly with vendors for their specific needs. A project within MarComm (a cross-departmental group of external communication points within Milwaukee County's community focused departments) was to identify translation vendors and provide a resource to Milwaukee County departments to find areas where standardization and alignment could create process efficiencies and cost savings. This resource will be available internally to departments in 2024 and is intended to grow.

DAS-IMSD Business Solutions and the Enterprise Applications teams are in the process of documenting translation functionality that is available within software applications DAS-IMSD supports. For example, Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint offers functionality to easily translate content. These applications and functionality are covered under Milwaukee County's current licenses. Documentation will provide guidance on how to utilize Microsoft and other application functionality to support Milwaukee County's constituents. Once the documentation is established in early 2024, DAS-IMSD will develop a communication and training plan with recorded trainings, help desk guidance, and other opportunities for employees to learn about translation functionality.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Translation services and resources aligns to 1B (Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government), 2B (Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered), and 3C (Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities).

RECOMMENDATION

This report is informational and there is no request at this time.

FISCAL EFFECT

This report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

TERMS

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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ATTACHMENTS

24-123 PRESENTATION

APPROVED BY:

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