



Center for
Civic Design

Quick Guide

Hiring a language access coordinator

**A language access quick guide to hiring
one of the most critical contributor's to
your department's language access plan.**

September 2022

hello@civicdesign.org

civicdesign.org

@civicdesign

Introduction

Language access coordinators are critical contributors for improving, assessing, and acting on behalf of your department's language access plan. The coordinator's role may vary based on the scale of your outreach initiatives, access to translation vendors, and expected workload. Language access coordinators usually organize work processes for creating, translating, and distributing election materials. They implement new changes, and refine language access services according to community needs. They may also represent the elections office to the public at community meetings, conferences, or other events.

If you are hiring a language access coordinator for the first time, you will want to review your office's language access and existing processes. Whether they are building on an existing program or starting one from scratch, you should think about what their first tasks will be and what resources are already available in your office or in your local government to help support them.

Language Access

Hiring a language access coordinator

- **Explore new approaches to recruiting.** Different avenues to take when searching to hire a language access coordinator. [Page 4](#)
- **Evaluate your language access needs and identify what will make the program a success.** Self assess your language program before you start the hiring process. [Page 5](#)
- **Include clear responsibilities in the job description.** Suggestions of what to include. [Page 6](#)
- **Include language proficiency in hiring planning.** Questions to ask potential hires about language proficiency. [Page 8](#)

[Read more about our research and best practices for Language Access at **civicdesign.org**](#)

Evaluate your language access needs and identify what will make the program a success

Your coordinator will be responsible for the success of the language access program. Without too much detail, consider including a statement about what you expect the coordinator to accomplish in their first year.

One way to self-assess your language access program is to ask yourself the following questions:

Does your office have a:

- Centralized languages access plan
- Translation process and documentation
- A way to manage complaints and feedback

Include clear responsibilities in the job description

The coordinator will act as a point of contact for all language services in the office. This work requires internal coordination and communication, working with translation vendors, attending community events, and keeping up to date with the latest efforts in language access for elections.

Good coordinators will be skilled in:

- Project management
- Community outreach
- Language services
- Communications
- Creative problem solving

A typical list of duties include:

- **Create and maintain a language access plan.** Language access plans are living documents that must be maintained. If your office does not have a centralized language access plan, the coordinator will create, implement, and update the plan.
- **Facilitate the translation process.** Coordinators are the point of contact for all language services. They will be responsible for identifying and working with translation vendors, receiving translations, finding proofreaders, and eventually finding ways to distribute the material to the respective non-English speaking communities.

Include clear responsibilities in the job description continued

- **Plan, attend, and participate in community events.** Community outreach should be a year-round priority for all elections offices. For language access coordinators, community events are a great place for voter outreach and to spark conversations about elections and voting. Your office can build a trusting relationship with the public and demonstrate your dedication to language access when the language access team is an active presence in your community.
- **Communicate and maintain relationships in the community.** Community partners are essential in building robust language access services. They help get the word out about recently translated materials, voter registration help, and they often give valuable feedback about translation efforts. Consider hiring someone with experience with community outreach so that you can maintain lifelong partnerships with organizations and groups in your area.
- **Stay updated on the latest approaches and strategies to language access:** In addition to administrative and community outreach work, coordinators will need to keep up with best practices in providing language support. If you want to ensure compliance with your language access plan, you want to hire someone with a desire to adhere to your team's best practices for upholding, tracking, and assessing your language access plan.

Include language proficiency in hiring planning

You should have at least a preliminary decision about what languages (and dialects) your program will cover, so that you can include proficiency in at least one language in the job description. You will also need to consider how you will assess proficiency in a language.

- **What languages (or dialects) do you expect the language access coordinator to speak?** While you might hire translators and interpreters for specific projects, your coordinator should be able to contribute to translation and interpretation in at least one covered language. Ideally this will be one of the most common languages the program will cover.
- **How will you assess language proficiency in both written and verbal communications during the hiring process?** You might engage someone from the community to help with interviews, or ask for a sample translation. Consider educational background, certifications, or detailed questions about the applicant's language proficiency.
- **Will this role be part-time or full-time?** If the language community or if your office covers multiple languages and services, you will need full-time language access staff. Smaller offices might require someone to handle fewer responsibilities on a part-time basis, or could combine language access with another role to make a full-time job. You'll understand your needs and the role's needs through your early assessment.

Explore new approaches to recruiting

Language access coordinators come from diverse professional backgrounds. If this is an entirely new position in your office, consider a broad approach to finding great applicants. To find potential staff with direct experience in different language communities and with language proficiency, you may need to do more than just post the job on your government jobs site.

Consider using a wide variety of channels to promote the job listing, such as:

- Organizations in desired language communities
- University language departments and graduate students
- Community message boards where you might announce the opportunity in both English and the desired language
- Election job boards like electionline
- Language access advocacy groups

Checklist

Hiring a Language Access Coordinator

Self-assess your current language program

- Does your office have a centralized language access plan?
- Does your office have a translation process and documentation?
- Does your office have a way to manage complaints and feedback?

Include clear job responsibilities in the job description

- Consider creating a statement about what you expect the coordinator to accomplish in their first year
- Create a list of typical duties for a new language access coordinator

Include language proficiency in hiring planning

- Have you considered what languages you expect the language access coordinator to speak?
- Have you determined how you will assess language proficiency in both written and verbal communications during the hiring process?
- Have you decided whether this role will be part-time or full-time?

Other language access quick guides

[Translating for elections](#)

Our guide on translating for elections focuses on ensuring translations are accurate for an election context. We cover:

- Understand the language used by your intended audience
- How to gather internal and external translation materials
- Why plain language (in any language) makes the translation process easier
- How to test your translations

[Working with translation vendors](#)

In our guide to working with translation vendors, we cover some of the best practices to keep in mind whether you are providing language access for the first time or adding a new language to your program.

- How to find a civic translator
- Questions to ask before hiring a translator
- Timelines to keep for working on projects



Center for
Civic Design

hello@civicdesign.org

civicdesign.org

[@civicdesign](https://www.instagram.com/civicdesign)