

Preparing Materials for Translation

Translating written information is a critical part of supporting multilingual communities. This worksheet will help you get the most out of your translation services.

THINKING ABOUT TRANSLATION

Thinking about the logistics

Here are some questions to think about if you are new to thinking about this:

- Is your content already written in plain language?
- What's your timeline? How much time does the translation team need?
- If your translation budget is limited, what is the most critical information to translate first? Is it your website? Intake forms? Community presentations?
- How will you review content to make sure the translated materials work for your audience before sharing widely?

Work with your audience

Even among folks who speak the same language, there are cultural and regional differences to word meanings, grammar, pronunciation, and communication norms.

An important part of the translation process is learning about your audience:

- Where are they from?
- What dialects do they speak?
- What cultural preferences and norms do you need to know to communicate with them well?

The more specific you can be about your audience, the easier it will be to write for their needs.

Coordinate with your translation team

Are there phrases or technical terms you use often in your work? Collaborate with your translation team to create a glossary of frequently used terms and the best way to translate these phrases. That way, staff can make sure they're using terms that already have approved translations, and translators aren't starting from scratch with each document.

What do you call this?

A water fountain?
Drinking fountain?
Bubbler?



Across the United States, there are regional and cultural differences even in English. To some extent, this is true of all languages. Keep this in mind when creating content.

PRE-TRANSLATION CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to make sure your materials are ready before sharing with your translation team. Add to it with your own ideas.

Audience

- I created this content with a clear audience in mind.
- My intended readers can clearly understand where to find information, what they need to know or do, and how to do it.
- I use culturally appropriate examples for my audience (it's ok if your translated version has some differences from the English version).

Word choice

- I used short simple sentences as much as possible.
- I used the active voice in general when writing.
- I have removed idioms, metaphors, and other figurative language.
- I used common, everyday language as much as possible.
- When I needed to include jargon or technical language to help my reader, I explained it adequately, used images, and/or gave examples.
- I collaborated with our translators to prepare for things that might be difficult to translate, such as technical language, acronyms, and program names.

Structure and design

- I left adequate space for translation (many languages take up more space on the page than English).
- I checked the Accessibility of my materials using an Accessibility Checker.
- I used culturally appropriate colors and images and avoided stereotypes.