

A Foreign Language Center of Excellence

A New Foreign Language Services Delivery Concept



A WHITE PAPER BY LANGUAGE LINE SERVICES

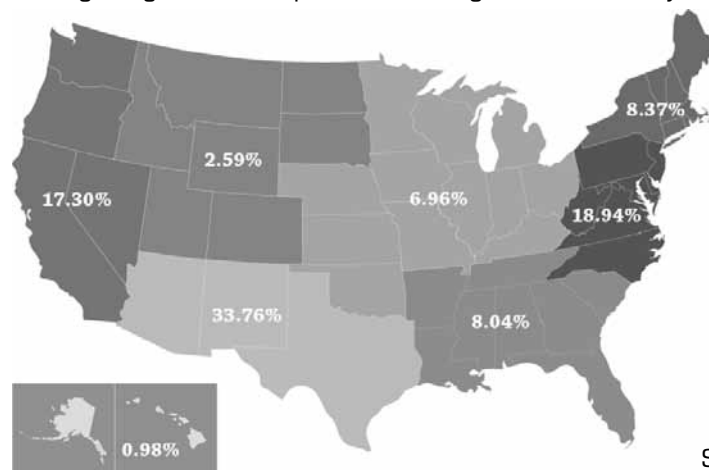
January 2012

Introduction

The growing ethnic minority in the United States is projected to be the majority by 2045.¹ While foreign language access in the U.S. is more important today than ever before, the demand for services will continue to grow. The challenge is servicing that demand. Government employees are faced with providing constituent services to limited English-proficient persons in situations where language services are not readily attainable. In short, the language assistance services that provide better access to government programs need to show improvement.

Federal, State, and Local Government Hiring Forecast

The U.S. Population is projected to be 438 million over the next 40 years with immigrants driving 82% of the increase. To support this segment of our population the government has experienced significant growth in hiring bilingual staff for positions throughout the country.²



Source: Fedscope 3/10

This reality hasn't been lost on the current Administration. The President has recently stressed that, while public expectations rise, the government simply isn't keeping pace with the technology advances used in the private sector. As such, the President has directed agencies to identify solutions that leverage new technology to improve public service and lower operational costs.

In light of this mandate, Language Line Services has developed a model language access service concept called a Foreign Language Center of Excellence (COE). In sum, the COE represents a technological breakthrough that provides federal agencies with an on-line portal through which users can access a full complement of phone interpretation services, written translation services, training and testing programs, management and monitoring capabilities, and data analysis and demand projection tools. The service options can be tailored to each agency's specific needs and all language activity can be channeled through a single, central depository.

In the discussion to follow, we take a close look at the COE and explain how it addresses government priorities and satisfies broad agency requirements.

¹ Population Reference Bureau, May 2009

² Pew Research Center

Governmental Challenges

Executive Order 13571 was issued on April 27, 2011. In the order the President states that “the public deserves competent, efficient, and responsive service from the Federal Government” and that “departments and agencies must continuously evaluate their performance in meeting this standard and work to improve it.” This order follows Executive Order 12862—which establishes customer service standards—and subsequent Presidential directives that require agencies to establish service standards that “put people first.”

In addition, Executive Order 13166 was issued in August of 2000. This order requires the federal government to improve access to services for persons with limited-English proficiency. A third significant baseline document is Department of Defense Directive 5160.41E that was issued on October 21, 2005. It established a structured and defined Defense Language Program.

Federal Government Foreign Language Mandates

- Executive Order 13571, April 27, 2011, “Improving Customer Service”
- Executive Order 13166, August 1, 2000, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency”
- DoD Directive 5160.41E, October 21, 2005, “Defense Language Program”



The COE is a tool that provides federal agencies with enhanced capability to comply with these three mandates.

On a high-level basis, the *raison d'être* for the COE is to directly address key societal and government challenges of the here and now. The challenges/drivers are:

- Customer Service
- Cultural Awareness
- Timing
- Dynamic Access
- Operational Efficiency

Customer Service: The Foreign Language Center of Excellence has been developed to help government agencies keep pace with the public’s rising expectations. The COE leverages the latest web and mobile technologies in order to improve the interactive language experience between the government and a substantial segment of the U.S. population. These technologies also have the added benefit of enhancing overall efficiency. Technology will enable government agencies to accelerate access to services, manage on-line usage, and provide timely user feedback for a deeper appreciation of the types of programs and services that will benefit the constituent public.

Cultural Awareness: Interpretation and translation aren't simple rendering exercises. Languages, behaviors, and religions are indigenous to specific regions. Each culture exhibits its own unique nuances and sensitivities. Government officials will benefit from knowledge of diverse cultures, as well as languages. The COE will serve as a tool to develop a greater understanding of these cultures and better prepare agencies for constituent cultural issues.

Timing: Our government faces budget restrictions that become more pronounced each day. Program funding is impacted. Pressure is mounting on virtually every agency to do more with less. As such, the timing of the introduction of the COE is beneficial. The COE minimizes the large up-front costs typically associated with providing language service access and keeps investments reasonable and balanced. It offers a "pay-as-you-go" option that allows agency bureaus and offices to choose only the services they require and to pay for them on an as-needed basis. This centralized service offers a flexible cost structure and the capacity to contain unnecessary usage and expense. The COE is being offered to government agencies as a response to budget pressures and other funding mandates.

Dynamic Access: The need for diverse language assistance services is growing as rapidly as the limited English-speaking population itself. Consequently, government agencies now need elegant, dynamic solutions to help them meet the evolving demands of our society. The COE embraces technology in order to offer a broader range of language services in a much more fluid way. Centralized services can now be added, improved, or replaced in far less time and at little cost. By using the COE, government agencies will become more agile, efficient, and responsive to mounting public pressure for access to services.

Operational Efficiency: By using the COE, managers are able to oversee all language activity. This activity can be enterprise-wide or within a particular bureau or office. The COE enables far more efficient monitoring, oversight, tracking, and reporting than was previously possible. Technology will reduce workforce personnel involvement and reduce operations and maintenance (O&M) costs. Managers can avoid service duplication, consolidate procedures, and increase overall efficiency. Additionally, task orders that are processed through the COE will be highly efficient and streamlined for government Contract Officer's Technical Representatives (COTRs) and procurement officials.

Satisfying Agency Foreign Language Requirements

The Foreign Language Center of Excellence was conceived to solve three major requirements that exist in each agency. These requirements are listed below along with ways they can be addressed.

How to obtain access to a large variety of services:

- Capture agency foreign language activity through a central depository
- Provide access to a wide range of foreign language services through a centralized approach
- Analyze data to better understand future demand
- Access to a full complement of language services
- Use of component pieces for flexible and streamlined response to government and customer demand

How to obtain efficient access to services using web and mobile technologies:

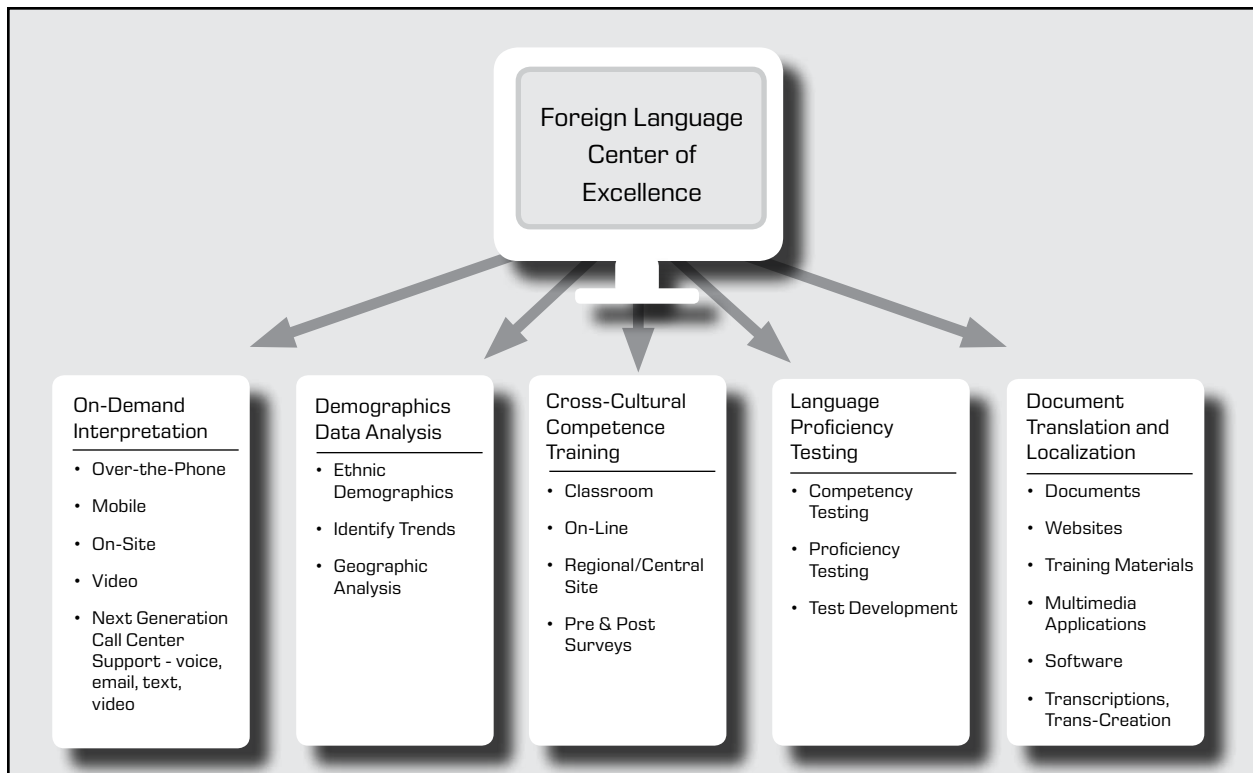
- Use a central portal
- On-demand customer access to interpreters on a 24/7 basis through cell/smart phone devices
- Access to translation and localization services through familiar application programming interfaces
- Widespread access to government services by constituent groups
- On-line surveys to improve service
- Post and share information across the agency

Avoiding large, up-front costs to access language services:

- COE and its “pay-as-go” approach
- Cost is driven by usage
- Technology will contain costs
- Better access to foreign language will help to streamline operations and make government more accessible to the general public

A Broad Variety of Services

A key element of the COE is its capability to provide a wide variety of foreign language services to federal agencies. These components include: phone interpretation, document translation, localization, cultural sensitivity training, language proficiency testing, and demographic data analysis services.



Phone Interpretation: For on-demand, over-the-phone interpreter access, the COE will provide agencies with three options. Agencies can dial a regional call center and have a live agent connect them with an interpreter. (“Next Generation Call Centers” will need to be prepared to support email, texting, and video.) They can also choose to dial a dedicated number from a mobile phone and be automatically connected with the appropriate interpreter. Their third option is to use an on-site, dual-handset phone for private three-party conversations.

All three services offer access to interpreters who are professionally trained in more than 170 languages. These interpreters have been carefully screened, trained, and tested for both cultural sensitivity and for the kinds of situations government representatives commonly encounter. As full-time employees, the interpreters are scheduled to be available on-demand, 24x7.

The newest over-the-phone service—the brainchild of an AT&T and Language Line Services partnership—brings interpreter access to the government’s growing mobile workforce. With just two keystrokes, on-the-go workers in intelligence gathering, law enforcement, court services, emergency response, disaster recovery, transportation security, healthcare delivery, social services, and other government domains can instantly access an interpreter from any location via their mobile phones.

Government workers are often unprepared to overcome the language barriers they face in the field—such as uncommon dialects, health emergencies, and the communication of time-sensitive information. This new, on-demand service allows field agents to bridge the communication gap in a quick and efficient manner. Using speech recognition technology, the service automatically selects the English-speaking caller’s requested language and immediately connects the caller to the proper interpreter.

With all three over-the-phone interpreting options, agency personnel will be prepared for any foreign language situation they encounter, at any time, and from any location.

Document Translation: The COE provides access to a full range of translation services that are professionally managed and run the gamut from basic to complex documents. This “written” form of communication with non-English speakers can be done in a variety of ways that range from a simple document authored in a word processing software to a complex multimedia environment that is rich in audio and video content. Even though the act of translating is the same regardless of the type of content presented, the science of translating, as it is performed by a language service provider (LSP), requires the design of strict processes to deliver services that respond to specific needs.

An example of these service offerings is one that provides organizations and government agencies with the ability to rapidly translate a large volume of small documents that only require a basic layout. These documents usually include forms, emails, letters, flyers, and other similar content for which delivery timelines can be adjusted to meet demanding schedules that place the focus on translation and its disciplines. Although the process of translation can be streamlined, the project manager can customize it to address particular customer or document requirements. Quality assurance testing is built into each step (single or multiple) to ensure product quality.

Document translation can be used for government organizations to translate foreign content into English or translate English into foreign content. Other capabilities include transcription, trans-creation, and most commonly, localization (website development in-language) these services can be used to communicate and provide access to a full array of government services to all constituent groups.

Localization: Localization services range from the translation of websites, on-line applications, training materials, e-learning solutions, and multimedia public video presentations (Flash, video, voice-overs, etc.) to more complex projects such as software applications, content management integration, and enterprise (ERP) business system solutions (SAP, CRM, database). Localization also addresses the cultural component of a given language. It provides a more complete understanding of concepts, people, and customs.

Web site localization in any of 170 different languages is also a great tool. Localization, in essence, means “translating” web sites and marketing materials to highlight a company or product in languages other than English, to address multiple populations of immigrants or foreign populations. Localization is often treated as mere “high-tech translation,” but this view is very incomplete. In general, localization addresses significant, non-textual components of translation. Thus, a localization process might include adapting graphics, “localizing” web sites, and using a range of software applications, such as databases, portable/handheld devices, web apps, business process systems, and kiosks. All of these skills aim to recognize local sensitivities with the goal of entering local markets by merging and appreciating the differing needs and customs.

Localization is a complex process that can involve engineers, desktop publishers, project managers and quality assurance personnel. Full localization services require highly trained personnel capable of extracting translatable text from any type of content, on any platform, and returning a fully translated product, after adhering to proven and documented processes.

Localization projects can involve multiple steps that depend on the type of files that are processed. The project manager works with the internal teams to choose the best process and provides regular and periodic customer communication. Localization also involves the use of many different technologies to lower the cost of a project and to drive operational efficiencies by using specific software at each milestone/step in the process.

Cross-Cultural Competence Training: Agency workforce cross-cultural competence training can be accessed through the COE. U.S. Government agency missions are increasingly global. When global mission requirements are combined with an increasingly diverse domestic population, there is a need and benefit for government workers to develop an appreciation about cultural mores, sensitivities, history, holidays, and customs of a variety of ethnic groups. A more complete understanding of different peoples and cultures is an important goal for federal agency personnel.

There are three ways that such cross-cultural competence training could be accessed through the COE. First, there could be classroom training at locations at, or near, government employees’ homes or workplaces. Second, there could be classroom training at central locations to which employees would travel. Finally, on-line training is available as the most cost effective and efficient method of training. The on-line

training program could include live simulations and instructor feedback. While much of the training could be self-paced, on-line tests would ensure that employees understand the content of the training. The training would also be supplemented by pre- and post-training workforce surveys. The survey results are used to measure effectiveness.

The removal of language barriers will improve an agency's public image. The additional step of awareness and education will enhance access and outreach and make constituent groups more receptive to government programs.

Language Proficiency Testing: Foreign language proficiency testing is offered through the COE. Agencies can now assess the skill and experience of their own bilingual employees. Proficiency testing is scheduled and taken on-line and administered by a live examiner. The testing center provides language proficiency analysis and other feedback so that agencies can identify the areas of greatest need within their bilingual workforces and make recommendations for improvement. Testing is based on the ILR (Inter-agency Language Roundtable) standards.

Language proficiency testing will positively impact and provide assurance that government agencies' bilingual staffs are qualified to serve the public and are compliant with all formal regulations.

Demographic Data Analysis Services: Large volumes of data regarding the use of language services often go untapped. The COE allows agencies to collect data, analyze it, and make it actionable in a way that optimizes language services to the constituent public.

The COE also provides agencies with the capacity to identify key geographic language data and ethnic demographic data that can be instrumental in identifying new trends and determining future demand. In addition, real-time tracking of foreign language assistance requests will assist agencies in developing user profiles and, ultimately, identify specific, localized needs for cultural sensitivity training.

After defining the parameters of the data that an agency wishes to examine, an analysis is automatically generated and posted to the agency's web portal. The analysis will include information such as the number of languages, the frequency of each language, the percentage of business each language represents to the agency, and more.

An examination of the language data that is collected will help agencies to anticipate future language demands and mobilize resources, accordingly.

Efficient Access to Services - The Language Portal

The foreign language demands of the government require a broad spectrum of services which few providers can deliver. The COE allows government agencies to access language services in a single portal. The portal provides government employees with a single, unified hub for all language needs and instantly connects to a

Center of Excellence Foreign Language Services Portal

- Over-the-Phone Interpretation: Usage Reporting, Invoicing, Face-to-Face Scheduling, etc.
- Demographics Data Analysis: Customized Analysis, Results, Sharing, etc.
- Cross-Cultural Competence Training: On-line Training, Live Simulations, On-line Workers Assessment, etc.
- Language Proficiency Testing - Workers Registration, Online Testing, Access Evaluation, etc.
- Document Translation/Localization - File Posting for Translation, Integration with Internal Systems, Usage Reporting, Full Portal Customization (Branding, Workflow), etc.



diverse array of services designed to address virtually any foreign language situation. The COE is platform-independent and easily accessed by any web-enabled device. The portal provides easy and efficient access to interpretation, translation/localization, training, testing, and demographic analysis tools.

While the COE offers a full suite of language services, the COE's real value is that it allows agencies to manage all of their language business through a single, centralized portal.

In order to simplify development, the great majority of business service platforms are solely user-based. The COE platform has taken development to a higher level and is community-based. Although data security and quality of service are top priority, data sharing is essential to enhance operational efficiency and prevent duplication of effort. COE users can share information, in real time, on any project in which they are engaged. It is possible for any user with the appropriate credentials to get an overview of current activities, across the organization, and to know the identity of every participant.

Users can access the COE to monitor all project-related information with 24/7 support. The portal gives management access to phone interpretation utilization reports, comprehensive on-line reporting, language proficiency test scheduling, bilingual agency staff training, and automated ordering and invoicing. The portal is also equipped with a powerful reporting engine that makes it easy to track funds on a wide number of variables. A large and comprehensive variety of reports and usage metrics can be accessed that allows an agency to track its business relationship with language vendors.

The portal can be seamlessly integrated into existing agency internal systems. It is designed to increase efficiency and productivity by providing service access from any location, at any time, and through virtually any device. Additionally, users are able to submit requests for reports, metrics, information, etc. from any business system with which they are familiar.

Government employees will no longer have to manage a large database of contact names, phone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses. Instead, by simply logging into the web, government users will have access to every type of language service. The portal also has dynamic reporting capability that provides users with the ability to monitor the services they purchase and track projects through their entire lifecycles. In addition, agency managers and directors will be able to centrally oversee the use of the full range of language services throughout their departments or organizations at national, regional, local, or individual levels.

The portal allows users to submit multiple language projects, all on time, on budget, and with superior quality. Projects and project management are delivered through the portal and quality assurance metrics are determined. The portal helps agencies achieve superior communication and coordination, prompt responses to every inquiry, and aggressive timelines.

The portal can also be customized as a branded webpage for any agency or department. Customizable options include name, graphics, colors, and other branding elements.

Benefits of the COE

Government agencies are likely to experience any number of unique benefits from launching their own Foreign Language Center of Excellence. At the very minimum, however, the COE will empower agencies to offer more efficient, simplified access, deliver more responsive service, and do such at a lower cost. The COE allows any government agency to efficiently and cost-effectively manage its business relationship with approved language vendors.

Simplified Access: Language service access attains a new level of simplicity with the COE. Agencies can quickly connect with quality interpreters from any location at any time of day or night. Agencies can also benefit from a much broader selection of language services, all from one centralized web portal. Users can request services, schedule appointments, analyze data, and publish program information, forms, applications and other documents for public view. Universal access to manage an agency's language business with vendors is realized.

Responsive Public Service: The President wrote that “the public deserves competent, efficient, and responsive service.” The COE attempts to deliver on that promise. The Center ensures access for a high demand segment of the U.S. population—the limited English-speaking public. It enables agencies to provide assistance at every point of language interaction, at any time, and from any location. Constituent services will be more accessible. Governmental services will be more universally available.

Controlling Service Costs: One of the greatest obstacles that government agencies face to provide service access for all constituent groups is the initial investment required to implement that service. The COE will help to minimize large, up-front financial commitments. The COE can be deployed quickly and with minimal capital outlay. Agencies can choose only those services that are required or desirable. New offerings can be deployed with a minimum of cost or effort. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Center of Excellence will permit agencies to report a substantial ROI. The COE will drive heightened access and usage by constituent groups to government services. More frequent usage translates into a higher ROI.

Most service contracts require a significant investment by agencies in workforce capital. Additionally, contracts with language service providers can involve substantial up-front fees and outlays. The COE operates on a “pay-as-you-go” system and helps to reduce up-front costs. Agencies can incur no service related expenses until those services are actually used. There are no retainers or minimum user fees. Agencies pay only for the services they use and only at the time that they use them.

The COE model also leverages technology to manage costs. The web portal and mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets reduce expenditures by enabling quick, easy, automated access to interpreting, translation, and other services, without the need for human interaction. In addition, agencies can modify services provided on the web portals with little assistance, because each service is plug-and-play.

In summation, the COE and new technology will reduce costs, drive usage, and show a positive ROI.

Conclusion

Government agencies have many challenges that relate to foreign language services. The Department of Defense has implemented a strong foreign language program. The DoD foreign language program has been placed under the readiness function as a sign of its importance to mission. The civilian agencies are required to provide services to persons with limited English-speaking proficiency and have recently emphasized improved customer service to all English and non-English speaking customers.

One innovative idea that has been discussed is the Foreign Language Center of Excellence. It represents a new way to provide language services to the federal government and to provide these services in a comprehensive, automated, and cost-effective manner. This technological break-through will provide a new tool to busy senior executives who must meet a variety of mission-related requirements. At a time of cutbacks in government services, it is especially attractive to have something better to offer our future customers. The Foreign Language Center of Excellence provides this enhanced capability.

About Language Line Services

Language Line Services is the world's leading foreign language services delivery firm. It draws on a large network of the most skilled interpreter employees to provide government and commercial customers with the highest levels of performance in foreign language services. It is one of the few global firms that incorporates interpretation, translation/localization, testing, training, and demographic analysis service, in a single organization. We enable customers to succeed where communication intersects with awareness. Our services are used by many of the world's leading corporations, financial institutions, and governments.



If you found this document pertinent and worthwhile and are interested in learning more or have any questions, please contact:


Michael M. Meldon

Senior Director for Federal Affairs

mmeldon@languageline.com

703-212-9029

www.languageline.com/federal

Follow us on Facebook  and Twitter 