

Language Justice Initiative

City of Cambridge

Nancy Tauber, Family Policy Council

Kate Thurman, Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Overview of Cambridge Family Policy Council

- Nancy Tauber, Executive Director
- Chaired by the Mayor
- Members: family & youth representatives; elected officials, the City's top decision-makers, and other community stakeholders
- Makes policy & program recommendations
- Current focus is language justice

Language Access should be more than meeting legal requirements and technical assistance.

It's about Language Justice



Language Justice is....

The right everyone has to communicate, to understand, and to be understood in the language(s) & formats in which they feel most comfortable.

Target Audience

Persons with Disabilities (PwD)

Address the needs of people with disabilities, providing information in **accessible formats**.

Language Preferred Other than English (LPOE) Individuals

Address the needs of those for whom English is not the preferred language for communication, either **verbal or written**.

By addressing the needs of PwD and LPOE individuals, **ALL** community members will be better understood, valued, and have equitable access to information, services and resources in Cambridge.

Where we are and where we want to go...

Timeline 2020-22

- What is Language Justice
- Formed Language Justice Working Group
- Launched Discovery Phase

- Continued Research
- Focus Groups

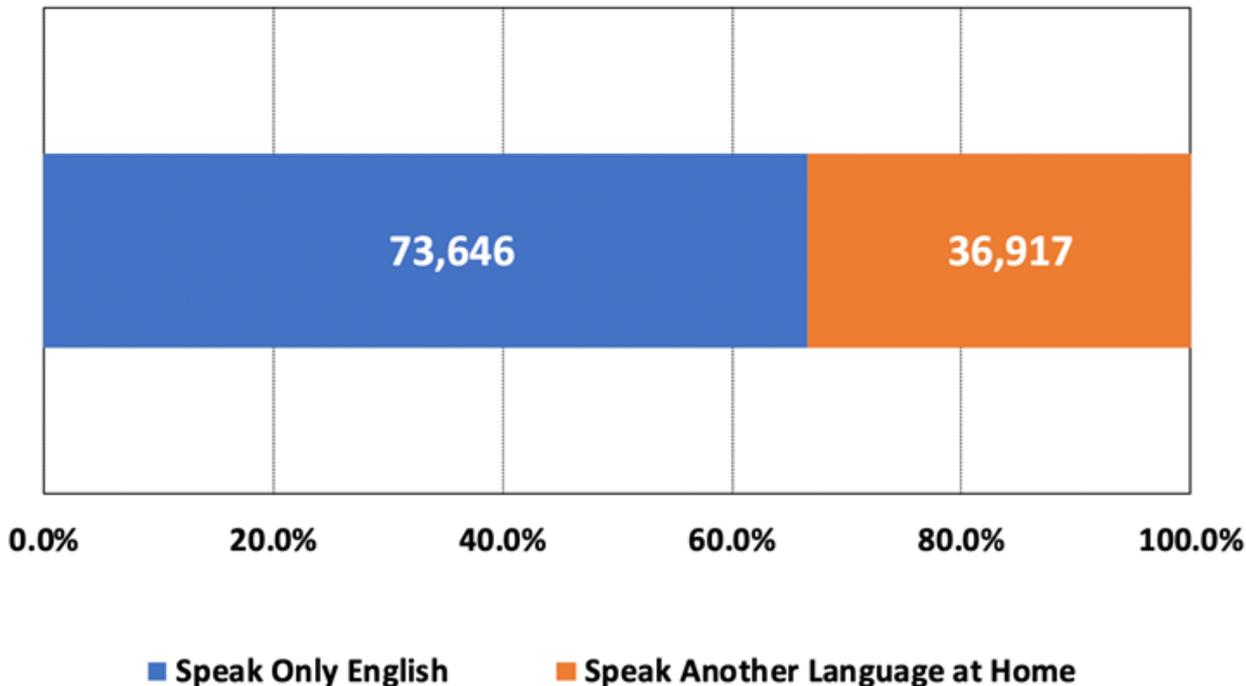
Approve Language Access Budget
Computer Assisted Technology Pilot



Cambridge Language Demographics

73,646 (66.7%) c
Cambridge
residents speak
only English at
home

36,917 (33.3%) c
residents speak
another language
home



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018 5-Year Estimates

Ability to Speak English

Household Population 5 & Older: 2014-2018

Of the 33.3% of households that speak a language other than English at home:

- 27% speak another language & speak English very well
- 3.3% (3,700) do not speak English well & are considered to be in a linguistically isolated household
- 2.9% (3,200) do not speak English well & are NOT in a linguistically isolated household

Key Learnings (Research, Survey, and Focus Groups)

- Language justice cannot be an afterthought - it must be a **primary thought**.
- By focusing on language justice, we will
 - Increase the number and ways people **engage**
 - Provide more **meaningful** and **equitable access** for **ALL** - especially those who are from underrepresented and underserved communities
- It's the **law**.
- Currently, there is **limited infrastructure** for language justice.
- **Funding** and **staff** are needed.
- Lead with a **continuous improvement** mindset and incorporate **accountability** mechanisms.

The burden of understanding information and navigating systems is often placed on community members who need the most help.

- What resources are available?
- How do I find them?
- Are they for me?
- Am I eligible?
- How do I access them?

What we can do now!

- We need to focus on excellent **customer service** - smile, speak slowly, active listening, be patient, etc.
- Prioritize **cultural translation** - the practice of translation while respecting and showing cultural differences
- Use **plain language!**
 - Plain Language Guide
 - Over 200 people
 - 5 Trainings
 - Poster Contest
 - Digital Accessibility Guide

LANGUAGE JUSTICE: WRITING FOR ALL!



Plain Language is clear, concise and well-organized. It is a powerful tool of inclusion and builds community trust.

✓ Best Practices:

- Know your audience
- Personalize your content
- Be short and to the point
- Avoid jargon and technical terms
- Use active voice
- Break up content with headers, bullets, and visuals

✓ Plain Language supports everyone, including people:

- Who are English language learners
- With varying literacy levels
- With disabilities



Why is Plain Language important?

Increases engagement

When language is clear, concise, and well-organized, it helps your audience:

- **Find** the information they need.
- **Understand** what they find.
- **Use** what they find in a *meaningful way* to meet their needs.

Reduces errors in translations

When our messaging is simple and concise, translations will be more accurate.

Benefits all!

There is no Language Justice without accessibility!

The people we communicate with have a **range of visual, hearing, physical and cognitive abilities**. Residents access information and resources in many different ways.

We can't achieve language justice without building accessibility into our communications. **Accessible communication is a powerful tool of inclusion.**

We are currently working on a guide dedicated to accessibility.

Digital Accessibility: Assistive Technology

We must create content that is accessible for people with disabilities, including those who use assistive technologies (AT) and adaptive strategies.

A few examples of AT:

- Screen reader software
- Text reader software
- Screen magnification
- Alternative input software and devices

Digital Accessibility: Adaptive Strategies

Adaptive strategies are **techniques that people with disabilities use to make it easier for them to access digital content.**

A few examples of adaptive strategies:

- Reducing mouse speed
- Turning closed captioning on
- Adjusting volume
- Increasing text size

Accessibility Guidelines

Making digital material accessible is complicated!

Target audience: City employees who create public-facing materials, including those who are not “techie”

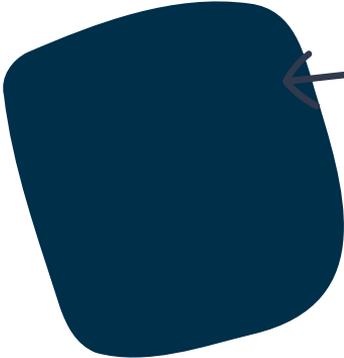
Goal: To provide an overview of key accessibility issues, with easy-to-understand how to tips

Formats:

- Flyers
- Newsletters
- Fillable forms
- Presentations
- Social media
- Reports
- Posters
- Mailings

Fiscal Year '23

- Language Justice Division (Human Rights Commission)
- Full Time Language Access Manager
- ARPA Funding for Translation and Interpretation



Smartcat Pilot



What is Smartcat?

Smartcat is an **all-in-one localization platform** that combines technology and human editors to help streamline translation processes.

Smartcat provides:

- 24/7 project progress monitoring to ensure measures are taken if there are any issues
- Management of terminology databases and translation memories
- Secure cloud storage

Benefits:

- Access to machine translation, human translators, and community reviewers.
- Translated words and department terms saved in a glossary.
- Pays all suppliers with a single transaction.
- **Quality** and **accurate** translations quicker.
- **Saves money and time!**
- Smartcat will help us build on community **trust!**



Advice

Slow down - <https://app.lvn.org/highlight/2386394>

Smile and be patient -

<https://app.lvn.org/highlight/2386396>