

LANGUAGE ACCESS IN THE CITY OF MADISON

[Department of Civil Rights](#) | [Language Access Program](#)

Language access ensures community members can meaningfully access City programs, services, information, and public decision-making regardless of the language they use or their communication needs.

The City's Language Access Program supports:

- Translation of written materials
- Spoken and sign language interpretation
- Captioning and CART services
- Plain language communication
- Department language access planning
- Community engagement and outreach support
- **Community Connectors**

Our approach is proactive. Rather than waiting for barriers to arise, we help departments anticipate community needs and design services, communications, and engagement opportunities that are accessible from the start.

The Department of Civil Rights provides centralized coordination, consultation, and contracted language access services to support departments across the City.

One of the City's most effective language access strategies is partnering with the trusted Community Connector Program.

COMMUNITY CONNECTORS MODEL

Community Connectors are trusted bilingual community members who help share City information, gather feedback, and **connect residents with City services in their preferred language.**

The City currently has Community Connectors serving **Spanish, Chinese, and Hmong** speaking communities and is exploring expansion to include an **ASL Community Connector**.

Connectors work with City departments, staff, and elected officials to help **design culturally inclusive programs, policies, practices, and community engagement efforts**.

By sharing information through trusted community networks and serving as an in-language connection point for residents, Connectors create two-way communication between communities and local government.

Community Connectors help the City move beyond translation to meaningful engagement, ensuring community perspectives help inform City decision-making.

REACH AND IMPACT

Community Connectors help the City move beyond translation by building trusted communication networks.

Spanish Language Outreach

- [LaMovida Radio Show](#)
 - 24+ episodes produced
 - 32+ unique guests
 - 15+ City departments represented
 - 36,000+ total views
 - 1,400 average views per episode
 - Facebook Page
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Chinese Language Outreach

- WeChat community group (Reaches approximately [1,200] community members)
- [Chinese-language YouTube content](#)
 - 10 uploads
 - Most viewed upload at 603 views

Hmong Language Outreach

- [WORT Hmong Radio Show monthly](#)
 - Facebook Page
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Why This Matters

- Residents receive information in languages they understand
- Departments gain insight into community needs
- Communities have trusted pathways to government
- Language access becomes proactive rather than reactive

How Alders can partner with Community Connectors

The earlier Community Connectors are involved, the more effective your outreach and engagement efforts can be.

Connectors can help you think beyond translation and design engagement opportunities that are culturally relevant, accessible, and meaningful for multilingual communities.

Ideas to Explore:

- Partner with Connectors when planning community meetings, listening sessions, surveys, or other public engagement efforts.
- Consider offering interpretation in Spanish, Chinese, and/or Hmong at public meetings and work with Connectors to help build awareness and participation.
- Explore hosting an in-language meeting where residents can engage directly in their preferred language, with interpretation provided for City staff and elected officials.
- Collaborate with Connectors to develop surveys, online engagement opportunities, or outreach strategies that reach residents through trusted community channels.
- Help amplify Community Connector media and outreach efforts, including radio, social media, WeChat, YouTube, and other community-based communication networks.
- Meet with Connectors and Language Access staff to discuss ideas, identify barriers, and explore new approaches to engaging multilingual communities.

Community Connectors are available not only to help communicate information, but to help design engagement strategies that better reflect and reach Madison's diverse communities.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Community Connectors General | communityconnectors@cityofmadison.com

Spanish Community Connector | Enoch Melgarejo | EMelgarejo@cityofmadison.com

Chinese Community Connector | Holly Chen | HChen@cityofmadison.com

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