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FACT SHEET

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Language Access Signage and Technology Grants

The Language Access Signage and Technology Grants support trial courts with the expansion of signage and technology initiatives to increase language access for limited-English-proficient (LEP), deaf, and hard of hearing court users. The Budget Act of 2018 included ongoing funding of \$1 million per year for language access signage and \$1.35 million per year for language access technology infrastructure support and equipment needs.¹ This funding is ongoing and trial courts are encouraged to apply for signage and technology grant funding on an annual basis.

Background

In January 2015, the Judicial Council adopted the *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts* (Language Access Plan).² The Language Access Plan provides recommendations, guidance, and a consistent statewide approach to ensure language access for all of California's approximately 6.4 million LEP residents and potential court users, as well as those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On September 24, 2019, the Judicial Council adopted a process to annually disburse these grants to courts and directed Language Access Services staff to solicit and review grant applications and develop recommendations for review and approval by the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness, the Information Technology Advisory Committee, the Technology Committee, and the Judicial Council.

¹ Of the \$1.55 million per year for technology, \$200,000 is dedicated to the Judicial Council for updates to the Language Access Toolkit resources, which now include multilingual resources on the California Courts Self-Help Guide site, and other council language access resource development, including translations. The amount available to trial courts for technology is therefore \$1.35 million each year.

² Available at https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2024-01/CLASP_report_060514.pdf.

Project Goals

The goals of the Language Access Signage and Technology Grants include:

- Support courts with the development of multilingual signage to help court users navigate the courthouse.
- Assist courts that may need equipment or software that will facilitate communication with court users and the courts.
- Allocate funds to as many trial courts as possible within the given budget to support language access signage and technology initiatives.
- Fund enhancements that provide court users with greater access to the courts and to information in their language.
- Encourage courts to establish for grant funding an ongoing plan that coordinates with other facilities planning and/or with planned or ongoing technology initiatives that support language access as a core service of the court.

Grant Categories

The Language Access Signage and Technology Grant categories were updated in April 2021 to expand the types of eligible projects to include website upgrades and to encourage courts to think about their future technology needs.³

Signage Grant Projects

Category	Project
1	Plain-language editing and professional translation of signage language that is unavailable in the Glossary of Signage Terms and Icons at https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/publication/glossary-signage-terms-and-icons .
2	Development of plain-language content and professional translation for information and wayfinding on court websites (including court language access page), translated in top five languages in the county
3	Development of multilingual wayfinding strategies, including a signage consultant, translation costs, electronic displays with automated maps, orientation guides with multilingual interface, and/or other types of multilingual electronic signage
4	Equipment and startup costs for an automated queue-management system that will contain multilingual information

³ Courts may use grant funding for facilities modification costs that directly relate to the grant purpose for signage or technology if the anticipated facility modification costs are built into the total grant amount.

5	Investment in multilingual nonelectronic signage (paper, plaques, etc.)
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Technology Grant Projects

Category	Project
1	Telephonic/video remote solutions equipment for court user assistance, both inside and outside the courtroom (for example, speakerphones and equipment for video remote appearances, video remote interpreting, counter assistance, or other self-help remote assistance, including tablets, computer equipment, and monitors) ⁴
2	Interpreter equipment, including upgraded headsets and other communication equipment for interpreters (for example, wireless transmitters and receivers, charging stations, and carrying cases)
3	Scheduling/communication software; applications for virtual assistance (smart court), including intelligent chat, multilingual avatars, and online features including portals that allow parties to request an interpreter; other software that allows for accurate multilingual communication between the court user and the court
4	Multilingual videos for court users, including translation costs
5	Audio-visual systems upgrades, broadband service, and/or other infrastructure enhancements (must directly relate to services provided to court users)
6	Multilingual kiosks (hardware, software), including design and translation costs

Application timing and process

The Language Access Signage and Technology Grant application process typically launches in spring. The applications are reviewed and approved in spring/summer by the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness, the Information Technology Advisory Committee, the Technology Committee, and the Judicial Council. Upon approval, courts are provided intra-branch agreements for their approved signage and technology grant projects. Courts have approximately 20

⁴ Courts that participate in the grant program and request funding for video remote interpreting equipment will be asked to follow VRI guidelines for spoken languages and American Sign Language: 1) <https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2023-07/vri-guidelines.pdf> and 2) <https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2023-07/cip-asl-vri-guidelines.pdf>.

months to complete their projects, submit invoices for reimbursement, and submit a final grant report for each completed project.

Application maximums

For fiscal year 2021–22, the maximum application amount was set to no more than \$200,000 (20 percent of the \$1 million signage allocation) for any one court for signage, and no more than \$270,000 (20 percent of the \$1.35 million technology allocation) for any one court for technology, unless total requests are lower than the total annual allocation. The increase is to encourage courts to apply for higher amounts and mitigate the future need for allocating contingency funding.

Grant application awards

Since April 2020, the council has been able to award signage and technology grants to all courts that applied. The number of courts that have applied each year has ranged from 17 to 29 courts. For each grant cycle, any funding that is unallocated has been set aside as contingency funding to be used in case of need by the awarded courts to help them finish their signage or technology project.

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