

Language Access For New Americans

Five Year Report (2005-2010)



December 2010

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What is LANA?

Launched in January 2005, Language Access for New Americans (LANA) is a project that improves access to services for refugees and immigrants with limited English skills by improving the quality and increasing the number of interpreters and translators in Maine.

Project History

In 2004, several local and regional foundations came together to discuss ways to help refugees and immigrants in Maine. The group was inspired and challenged by former Maine Attorney General Jim Tierney's speech at the Maine Philanthropy Center describing the economic and social benefits of welcoming and embracing refugees and immigrants to Maine. In response to this message, the funders, led by the Maine Philanthropy Center, convened a group of service providers, advocates and community leaders working with New Americans in Greater Portland in the fields of health, human services, education and legal services. The funders were motivated to do something collectively to affect positive change for New Americans instead of funding separate projects. Asked what issue was a common barrier to all, the providers identified language access as a common obstacle to accessing services. To explore this issue in more depth, the River Rock Foundation funded a study by Grace Valenzuela from Portland Public Schools' Multilingual & Multicultural Center to examine translation and interpretation services in Greater Portland and review language access models from other states.

The service providers, convened by United Way of Greater Portland, used the report's findings to develop a three-year pilot model for expanding and improving the quality and affordability of interpretation and translation services in the region. The model builds upon the existing assets in the community - interpreters and translators, many of whom are New Americans - by improving their skills through training, their accessibility through a common referral point, and addressing affordability through a pool of matching funds for service providers. The model was reviewed and enthusiastically supported by the funders. The River Rock Foundation and Betterment Fund were the first to step forward with three-year grants. United Way of Greater Portland was asked to accept responsibility for housing the project and coordinating the fiscal requirements for the initiative.

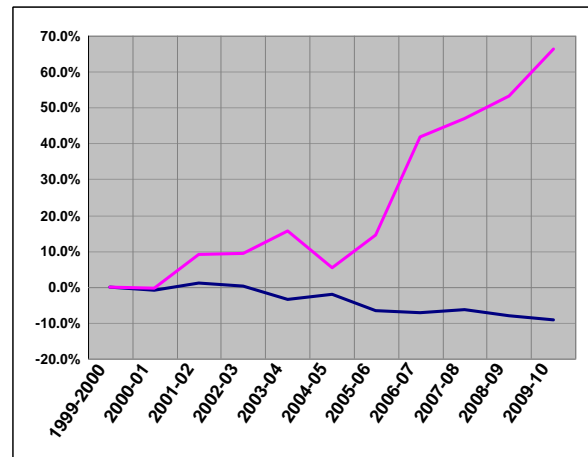
The collaborators now comprise the LANA Advisory Board, which provides ongoing leadership for this project.

Increase in Language Access Needs in Maine

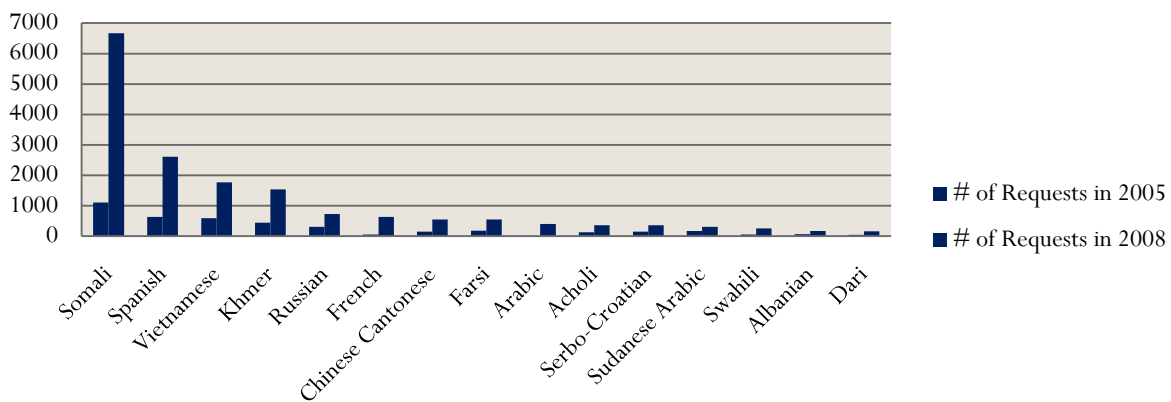
Between 2000 and 2005, the foreign-born population in Maine increased from 36,691¹ to 43,298². According to Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), however, the current number is likely even higher – over 55,000. The English Language Learner (ELL) students' number in Maine schools grew from 2,748 in 2000 to 4,571 in 2010³.

With Maine's increasing refugee and immigrant population, the need for interpreter services has also increased. For example, in 2009, Maine Medical Center received **22,141 requests for interpreter services in 47 different languages** in comparison with 4,370 requests in 35 languages in 2005. This 400 percent increase can likely be attributed to better data collection, and health care providers and patients being aware of the availability of interpreter services.

Rate of English Language Learner Enrollment in Maine Schools
1999/2000 – 2009/2010
Grades K-12



Maine Medical Center Interpreter Requests for top 15 languages in 2005 and 2008



¹ U.S. Census 2000

² 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

We acknowledge that the information in the report is based on the old data and that the new Census data will be available at the end of 2010.

³ Maine Department of Education

What are the languages?

Unlike many other states where Spanish is a dominant language, the majority of Maine's non-English speakers speak Somali due to the large number of primary and secondary refugees. Although the majority of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Russians arrived in Maine about a decade ago, the need for these specific language interpreters is still high, while a surge in LEP refugees and political asylees from Iraq, Burma, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Kongo and Rwanda has led to an increased need for Arabic, Burmese, French, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi and Swahili interpreters.

The top 10 languages spoken by LEP patients at Maine Medical Center are: Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese, Khmer, Arabic, Russian, French, Farsi, Chinese Mandarin, and Chinese Cantonese. The top 10 languages spoken by LEP patients at Mercy Hospital are: Somali, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Vietnamese, Farsi, French, Khmer, Chinese Mandarin and Acholi. The top 10 languages spoken by LEP students in Maine schools are: Somali, Spanish, French, Chinese, Khmer, Arabic, Vietnamese, Passamaquoddy, Russian, and Acholi.⁴



⁴ Maine Department of Education

How Has LANA Made a Difference?

Interpreter Qualifications

In 2005, LANA established the state's first minimum standards for interpreter competency. To qualify as an interpreter, a person must have at least a high school diploma; show oral proficiency in English and the other language by submitting proof of education in that language or successfully passing a language proficiency test; and complete at least 12 hours of training on the interpreter's role and ethics.

In lieu of state standards, LANA qualifications have become well known and acceptable standards for employers using interpreter services. St. Mary's Hospital and Pediatric Associates of Lewiston, for example, now require all of their contract interpreters to meet LANA standards. Maine Medical Center and Catholic Charities Maine have been sending applicants and newly hired interpreters to LANA's 12-hour *Basic Skills of Interpreting* training as well as the more advanced 100-hour Medical Interpreter Training.

Centralized Interpreter Database

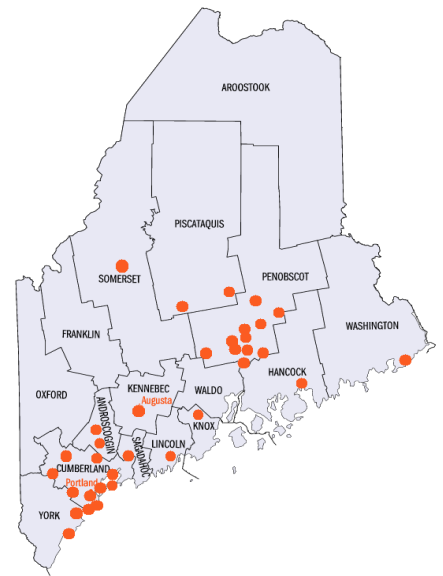
LANA has created a statewide database of qualified interpreters, which is accessible through www.lanamaine.org, and maintains over 250 interpreters that meet LANA qualifications. The database is searchable both by language and by town. Each listing provides information about the interpreter's language, location, availability and background training. Interpreters can be contacted directly to request their services.

Service providers use the database to either find interpreters or to make sure that the interpreter is qualified. In average, the online database is viewed 230 times a month. During last five years, the database was used by people from various agencies and companies, including Boys & Girls Club, Community Concepts, Community Counseling Center, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Lewiston School Department, Maine Department of Labor, Pediatric Associates of Lewiston, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Salt Institute, Sweetser, University Health Care Center, US Attorney's Office-District of Maine, and Winter Kids.

Interpreter Training

Basic Skills of Interpreting

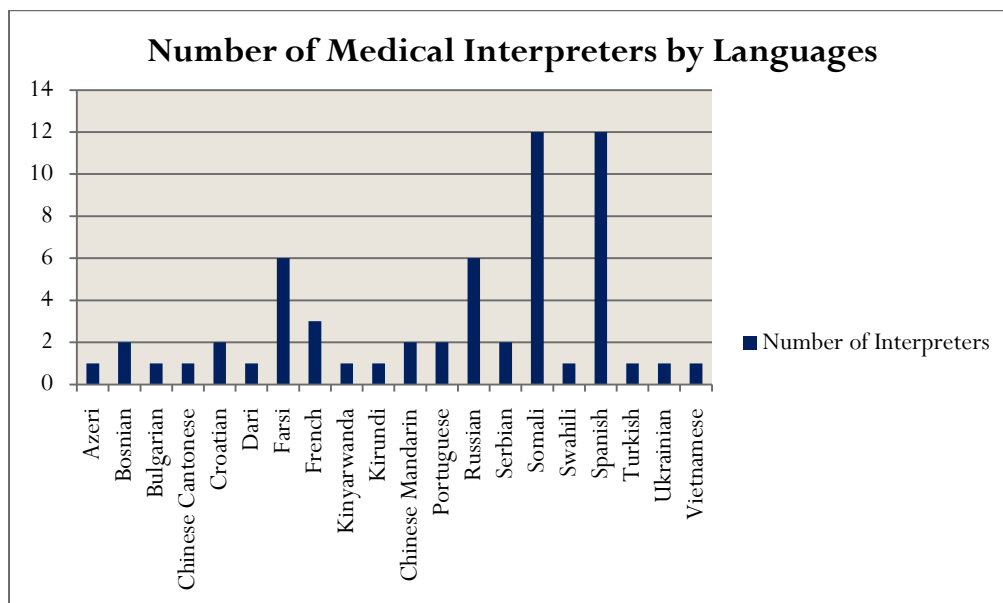
During the last five years, LANA has trained **228 interpreters of 48 languages** on *Basic Skills of Interpreting*. Although the majority of interpreters live in the Greater Portland and Lewiston-Auburn areas, interpreters from 12 of Maine's 16 counties have attended LANA workshops in Portland, Lewiston and Bangor. One third of trained interpreters (84) speak Somali, followed by Spanish (49), French (23), Russian (15), and Arabic (15).



Location of LANA Trained Interpreters

Medical Interpreter Training

In 2006, LANA was the first program in Maine to develop Medical Interpreter Training. The 100-hour course is designed to prepare interpreters to facilitate linguistic and cultural communication between patients and healthcare providers at doctors' offices, hospitals, emergency rooms and other medical facilities. The training curriculum was designed by local interpreters, educators, and healthcare providers. The course includes lectures on health care topics, interpreting exercises and ethical case studies. Throughout the course students visit various health care facilities and practice interpreting.



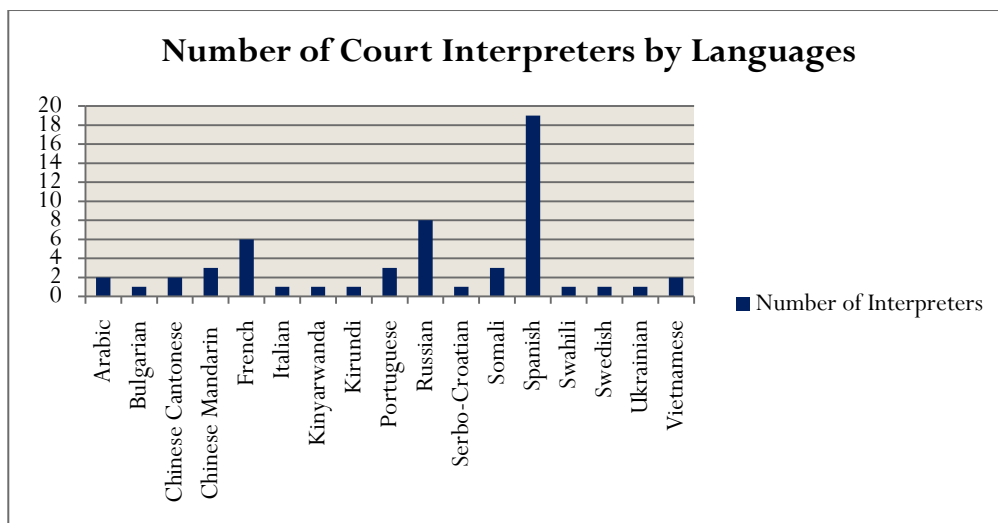
At the end of the course, the students take a competency test that consists of a multiple choice medical terminology and interpreting ethics test in English and an oral interpretation test, which is videotaped and evaluated. The oral test is developed with the help of and administered at University of New England (UNE) College of Osteopathic Medicine's Clinical Performance Center. During the exam, UNE medical and physician assistant students play the role of health care providers. Bilingual community members are recruited to play the LEP patients' roles. Students who successfully pass the competency tests receive Competent Medical Interpreter certificates. Since the program started, four trainings have been offered and **45 medical interpreters of 20 languages** received their training in Portland and Lewiston. The fifth course is currently finishing in Portland.

Court Interpreter Program

Since 2008, LANA has been assisting Maine's Judicial Branch in developing and implementing its first Court Interpreter Program. Under the contract with Maine Administrative Office of Courts (AOC), LANA administers National Center for State Courts' court interpreter certification written tests, oral proficiency interviews and offers court interpreter trainings in Portland and Lewiston. To date, **46 interpreters of 13 languages** have been qualified as court interpreters. Maine District Courts use this list of qualified interpreters to serve people with limited English proficiency.

"...Thank you for the opportunity to take the court interpreter training. It was the best educational/work training I've ever attended and I have no words to describe how valuable it was for me... I think there was me BEFORE the training and a different me AFTER the training...the realization that there is so much to learn and to be changed but to know we have the tools to make such changes is inspiring.

*Monica DeAragao,
Portuguese interpreter*



Other interpreter trainings include *Interpreting in Domestic Violence Cases*, *Effective Use of Language Skills for Bilingual Employees*, *Interpreting for School Based Mental Health Providers*, *Interpreting for Torture Survivors*, *Freelance Interpreting Business*, *Modes of Interpreting*, and *Enhanced Medical Interpreting: Mental Health* workshops. *Interpreting as a Career* classes were created and offered to bilingual students at Portland High School in 2005 and Deering High School in 2008. Monthly brown bag lunch-and-learn continuing education sessions for interpreters started in 2010 in Portland and Lewiston.

Matching Grants & Training for Service Providers

In order to help nonprofit organizations improve their access to the pool of interpreters, LANA developed a matching grants program. Since 2005, grants ranging from \$750 to \$5,000 (a total of \$35,000) have been given to eight nonprofit/public agencies: Community Counseling Center, Youth Alternatives Ingraham, South Portland Police Department, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project and Maine People's Resource Center. In addition to grants, LANA helped each organization develop language access policies and provided training for staff working with interpreters. While the matching grants program was very successful, it was discontinued in 2009 due to budget constraints.

Training on working with interpreters and on legal requirements of language access has been provided for the Cumberland County Jail, Family Crisis Services, Portland Police Department, Portland Public Schools, Department of Health and Human Services, Maine State Bar Association, Maine Ombudsman, mediators working with the Maine Judicial Branch, 2-1-1 Maine, Legal Services for Elderly, Portland Housing Authority, Safe Voices, and guardians ad litem.

International Translation & Interpretation Day

To promote the work of interpreters in Maine and to bring awareness to their profession, LANA has been organizing an annual celebration of International Translation Day in Portland. The fifth annual event on September 30, 2010 featured guest speakers Izabel Arocha, President of the International Medical Interpreter Association and Inna Persits-Gimelberg from the National Board of Certification of Medical Interpreters, who highlighted the beginning of the national certification of medical interpreters. The event is attended by local dignitaries, services providers and as many as eighty interpreters each year.

Future work for advancing language access in Maine:

1. LANA should continue as a language access advocacy and resource program

LANA was initially planned as a three-year pilot program, but due to a continued community need for interpreter training it has continued to operate beyond this time frame. Despite the significant work that LANA has done during the past five years, based on service providers' and interpreters' feedback, there is still a great need for specialized medical, legal, education, mental health and other types of interpreter training. Service providers continue to need training on cross-cultural communication and on working with interpreters.

2. Expand language access training and education for service providers

Many organizations in Maine realize the importance of language access for their LEP clients and patients, but the extent and scope of the policies they developed varies greatly. Some organizations are still using untested, untrained individuals as interpreters. LANA needs the resources to offer more assistance with developing language access policies and provide regular training opportunities for health, social, and legal service providers on working with interpreters and legal requirements on language access.

3. Offer continuing education for interpreters

Currently, there are no ongoing training opportunities for interpreters in Maine beyond basic, court, and medical interpreter trainings. Ongoing continuing education opportunities are needed to maintain the quality standards and to keep abreast of changes and advances in the various fields in which interpreters work.

4. Funding for language access

Often it is not the lack of awareness and desire to provide interpreter services, but lack of funding that limits service providers in providing interpreting and translating services for their LEP clients.

In health care, the federal government reimburses medical service providers for interpreter services that are provided to people enrolled in Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), if states choose to include this service in their Medicaid and CHIP plans. States are not required—*but have the option*—to pay for language services in their Medicaid

and CHIP programs for providers. Only 13 states plus the District of Columbia currently are reimbursing health care providers for language services, and Maine is one of them.

However, in other areas there is no easily available funding for interpreter services and service providers struggle to find funding. Limited funding leads to limited access to services for LEP clients. LANA needs to educate local funders and to advocate for funding for interpreting and translating services.

5. Consolidate resources and create employment opportunities for interpreters

Currently, only Maine Medical Center and Catholic Charities Maine employ per-diem and on-call interpreters. Portland Public Schools' Multilingual & Multicultural Center employs Parent/Community Specialists and Native Language Facilitators who provide interpretation and translation services for the school department. Lack of full-time or even part-time interpreter positions causes a high turnover within the interpreter pool, when highly qualified individuals are forced to leave the field in search of a reliable income. Consequently, there is a continuing need to recruit and train new interpreters.

Out of the 22,141 requests that Maine Medical Center received in 2009, in-person interpreter service was provided in only 7,410 (33%) cases. Interpreter services in the remaining encounters were provided over the phone either by Pacific Interpreters or Certified Languages International, both located in Oregon. This is not unique to Maine Medical Center. Other local agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services still rely heavily on phone interpreter services. While a telephone interpreter service at times is the only option, creating ways to better utilize local interpreters would be beneficial for both the interpreters, who can get more assignments, and for organizations needing interpreter services. Telephone interpreter services cost at least \$90 per hour versus \$25-\$50 per hour for a local, in-person interpreter service.

Currently, organizations needing interpreter services contract directly with freelance interpreters via LANA's database (at an average rate of \$25/hour) or with CCME *RISinterpret* or another company (at an average rate of \$50/hour). Although working with freelance interpreters is less expensive, organization staff must schedule the sessions and process each interpreter's payment as a separate contractor. Further cost analysis on the

feasibility of creating full time interpreter positions, whose salaries and schedules would be shared by a few organizations, would be beneficial.

6. Language access should be a higher priority for the State of Maine

Currently, Maine state government does not have a position of Language Access Coordinator. This position existed at Maine DHHS's Office of Multicultural Affairs, but has been vacant since December 2008. In the past, complaints have been filed with the U.S. Office of Health and Human Services' Office of Civil Rights alleging that the Maine Department of Human Services and Maine Judicial Branch did not provide interpreters and other language access services to LEP individuals. Since these complaints were filed, Maine DHHS and the Judicial Branch have taken significant steps to provide language access to their services. However, without vigilant oversight, language access will continuously be a challenge for the State of Maine.

7. Educate LEP clients about their right to have an interpreter and about the role of the interpreter

Many LEP refugees and immigrants are not aware of their legal rights with respect to interpretation/translation services. Educating LEP individuals about their legal rights to free interpretation/translation services from organizations that receive federal funding can improve their access to services. They also often misunderstand the role of interpreters and expect interpreters to provide transportation, advocacy and other services, which creates series of potentially risky ethical scenarios for interpreters. Information and education on the role of interpreter and the risks of using untrained interpreters should be provided to LEP community members.

Budget

6-Year Revenue (FY 2005-2010)

Grant Revenue

River Rock Foundation	240,000
Betterment Fund	75,000
Hannaford	50,000
United Way of Greater Portland Foundation	60,000
Maine Medical Center	25,000
Fisher Charitable Foundation	20,000
Sam L. Cohen Foundation	15,000
Maine Community Foundation	19,000
Maine Office of Minority Health	4,000
Total	508,000

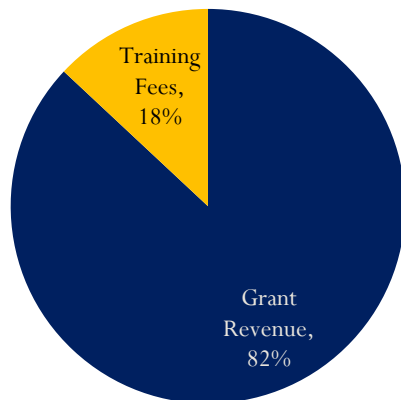
Training Fee Revenue	111,296
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TOTAL 619,296

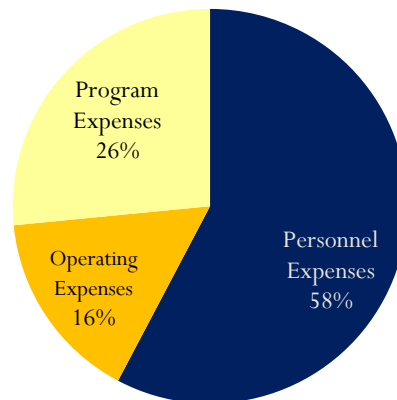
6-Year Expenses (FY 2005-2010)

Wages & Benefits	321,185
Operating Expenses	85,762
Program Expenses	
Interpreter Training	111,829
Matching Grants	35,475
Total Expenses	554,251

Revenue



Expenses



Thank you!

To the following LANA Advisory Board members and their organizations for their support and guidance during the last five years:

Maureen Clancy, Mercy Hospital

Malvina Gregory, Catholic Charities Maine Refugee & Immigration Services

Janet Henry, Maine Philanthropy Center

John Shoos, United Way of Greater Portland

Beth Stickney, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project

Cynthia Tack, Maine Medical Center Interpreter & Cross-Cultural Services

Rachel Talbot Ross, City of Portland

Meryl Troop, ASL Interpreter/Civil Right Advocate

Grace Valenzuela, Portland Public Schools Multilingual & Multicultural Center

Carolyn Wollen, Betterment Fund

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Tae Chong, Maine Housing Authority

Jeff Henthorn, Maine Administrative Office of Courts

Margie McDonald, Portland Public Schools Multilingual & Multicultural Center

Karen Moran, River Rock Foundation

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Community Counseling Center

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Lewiston Career Center

Pine Tree Legal Assistance

Portland English as a Second Language Scholarship Fund

St. Mary's Health System B Street Health Center

University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine's Clinical Performance Center