

Recommendations: Improving Translation Timelines for Ballot Materials

At the August 2024 LAAC meeting, concerns were raised about the compressed translation timeline currently in use. Accurate and accessible translations—especially in state-required languages—require sufficient lead time, thorough review, and community-informed input.

The Subcommittee proposes the following recommendations for the LAAC to consider for submission to the Secretary of State.

Key Timeline Constraint:

Day 123 before the election: SOS finalizes **English Version 1** (ballot titles, and labels) and delivers to state contracted translators.

Day 105 before the election: English Version 1 (plus lists of supporters/opponents) delivered to counties, who then begin translations into **state-required languages (14201)**.

- [SOS Translation Timeline Spreadsheet](#)
- [2024 Transition Timeline](#)

Possible Recommendations

1. Explore Feasibility of Delivering English Version 1 to Counties on Day 123 (not Day 105):

Counties and local vendors could receive the finalized English text at the same time as state contracted translators. This would:

- Extend the translation and review window by 18 days for counties
- Potentially reduce bottlenecks and rushed turnarounds at the local level, especially for multi-language counties

2. Standardize Glossary and Dialect Guidance Early in the Process:

Dialect and terminology disagreements remain a key challenge.

Recommendations:

- Support efforts to update and expand glossaries of terms that counties use for translations.
 - Consider partnerships between community groups and philanthropy to accomplish this.
- Create a public facing glossary, that is available online and provided to County LAACs, that civic orgs and voters could use to ensure terminology is understood.

3. Ensure Transparency and Usability of Review Tools:

During the BLTS process, participants noted the need for:

- A clearer explanation of BLTS process, recruitment, and review flow (ex. first draft → review → translator feedback → final) with the goal to improve recruitment.
- Explore efforts to make the BLTS process and commenting infrastructure more user-friendly and accessible because not everyone has experience with excel sheets and changing character formats within excel.
- More language reviewers (e.g., Thai had only 2–3)