

Using translating services for written materials



Government of South Australia
Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion

This checklist is for use by service providers when engaging a translating service to translate written materials into other languages.

Sometimes resources are developed specifically for client groups who speak particular languages. Other times, resources that already exist in English are later translated into multiple languages.

Preparing the material for translation

- Consider your key message or key information to give to the target group
- Identify the literacy levels of the clients you are targeting and tailor the message accordingly. Are the client group literate in their first language? Is written text the best mode of communication? Would the message be better received if presented using pictures or in video format?
- Consider how to present the information as clearly as possible:
 - Don't use lengthy or complex text
 - Avoid jargon and slang
 - Consider maps and diagrams
 - Explain unfamiliar concepts
 - Spell out acronyms
 - Be aware of tone and type of language used to present sensitive issues
- Identify the appropriate medium for translated information (e.g. fact sheets, brochures, website, video, CDs or DVDs)
- Be aware of copyright laws and liabilities and seek written approval for use and translation of material
- Assess whether the material is sensitive or unfamiliar to the target audience. You may wish to consult with community members
- Be aware of cultural sensitivities and the reaction from your audience. How is the information handled or perceived in the clients' culture?

Identifying languages for translation

Some or all of the following questions may help to identify appropriate languages for translation:

- Who is your target audience?
This may reflect the South Australian population, your particular client group, or groups you are not currently reaching
- What language/s do they speak, and what level of English proficiency do they have?
The largest groups may already have good English proficiency and not need a translated resource. To meet the biggest need, translate materials into the most common languages spoken by your target group in which there are low levels of English proficiency
- What else do you know about your target audience?
Characteristics such as birthplace, time in Australia, age, gender, visa type or religion, may be helpful to identify service and information needs and, in turn, identify languages for translation.

Booking a translating service

- Contact a preferred translating service and ask to book a NAATI-accredited or NAATI-recognised translator (see [Interpreting and Translating Policy for preferred providers](#))
- Provide any materials that will assist an accurate translation, such as background material or a glossary of common terms
- Inform/negotiate the terms of translation, including:
 - which parts of the material are to be translated (text, layout, graphics and tables)
 - any software or other requirements
 - final format (e.g. electronic/soft copy, hard copy, CD, video)
 - delivery address and method (post or email)
 - time frame, including turnaround time for any corrections or amendments
 - inclusions and exclusions in the cost such as: word count, turnaround time, administration fees, cancellation fees, correction fees, proofreading and editing fees.

The final translated product

- Ensure that the final copy is proofread by a translator. Check for misspellings, that the source document layout matches the final product (including fonts, consistent headers and footers, correctly-spelt names and page numbers)
- Consider having the document translated back into English for quality assurance purposes, and/or field test the document with relevant organisations
- Consider asking a bilingual community member to read through the document in both languages to check for accurate literal and cultural translation
- Ensure that each version of the document can be identified by a version number and that changes are clearly marked on each version for the translator
- Include a reference in English containing the document title and name of the translated language (so service providers can identify it easily for distribution purposes)
- Ensure a copy of the resource is available in English (so staff know what information is in the resource).