



LANGUAGE JUSTICE CAPACITY BUILDING:

2021-2022 FINAL REPORT

A collaborative project with:



LANGUAGE JUSTICE
COOPERATIVE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Introduction	3
02 Acknowledgements	5
03 Timeline	6
04 Capacity Building	7
05 In Focus: Language Justice at USCHA 2022	15
06 Recommendations	17
07 Conclusion	20
08 Appendix	21

01 | INTRODUCTION



Throughout Tilde's 12+ month partnership with NMAC, our team had the opportunity to engage with and learn from a range of stakeholders in the NMAC community: We developed our overall process in coordination with Damián Cabrera and Moisés Agosto from NMAC's Treatment team through a series of ongoing check-ins and planning conversations. We also met with NMAC's Language Justice Committee to learn about and give feedback on the different dimensions of language work across NMAC departments. We facilitated an in-person Language Justice Institute for all Staff in March during NMAC's annual retreat. We invited staff members to share and connect their experiences with language. As a result, we began creating a shared understanding of language justice practices, organizational challenges, and opportunities related to implementing new practices. Last, we facilitated a language justice workshop and community forum during USCHA in San Juan, Puerto Rico, for conference participants from various organization types. Through these touchpoints and our internal reflection and planning sessions, we gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of NMAC's role in the HIV sector. This report centers on our reflections and intervention proposals in support of NMAC's language justice journey.

In this report, we share insights gathered from our various in-person sessions and virtual conversations:

The **4 Reflections on NMAC Staff Input** from the March in-person training give our thoughts on key insights from the Language Justice Institute and our conversations leading up to and after.

INTRODUCTION

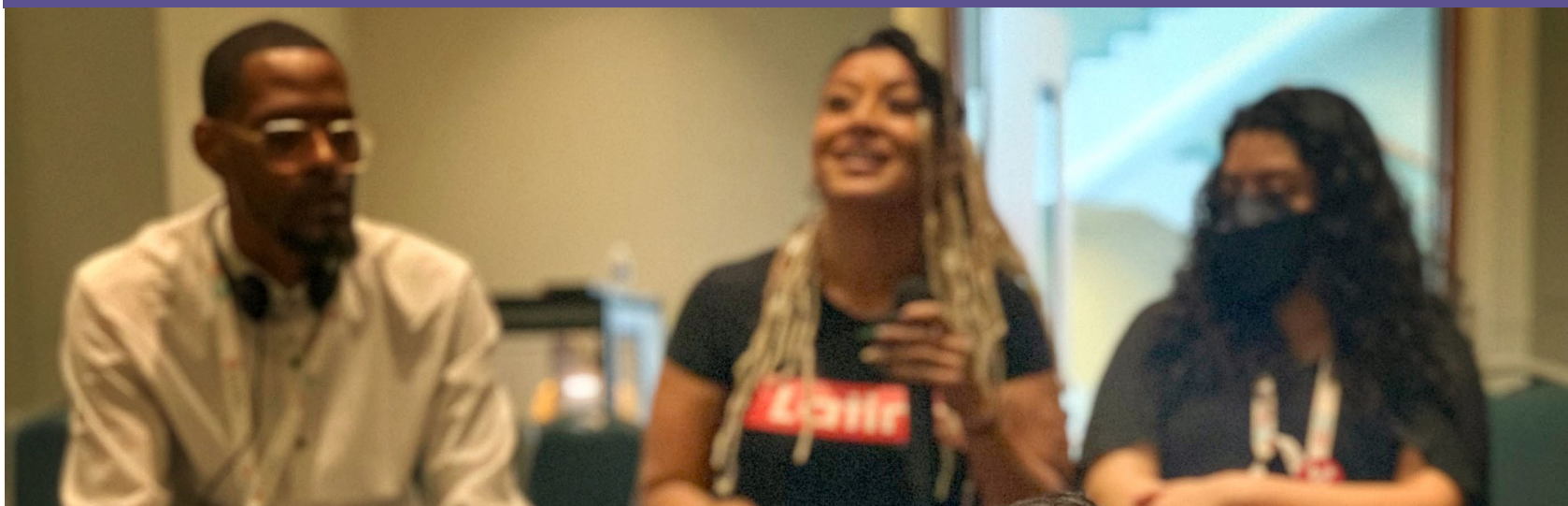
The **6 “Are We Listening?” Reflections on Participant Input** give insights into the concerns and priorities of various organization types participating in our USCHA Institute, including prevention, treatment, advocacy, research, vendors, and funders.

The **Best Practices for ASOs** reflect Tilde’s Top 6 suggestions arising from our USCHA Institute and intent to be broadly applicable to different organization types.

The **Language Justice at USCHA 2022** section contains focused feedback for NMAC as it continues to grow in its application of language justice best practices at large gatherings like the Biomedical Summit and USCHA.

In the report’s Conclusion, we offer a **Short List of Priorities** toward broad language justice infrastructure within NMAC as an organization.

02 | ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



We are deeply grateful for the trust, time, and attention NMAC has given to Tilde for the last year, beginning with the warm invitation made by Moisés and Damián during our remote check-ins with the Language Justice Committee (Alison, Cora, Chip, Joe, and Jonathan), and during our in-person engagements in March and October. We also owe a debt to the trailblazing work of POZ advocates Marco Castro Bojórquez and José Romero, who were among the first to connect the dots from MIPA to language justice (LJ). As we conclude the work we began just over a year ago with NMAC, *we look back* with humble appreciation for the many multilingual efforts already underway at NMAC (including Escalate and Elevate and the big Summit and USCHA events, among others). *We also look forward* with anticipation and faith that NMAC will continue what it began in the two-year run-up to USHCA in San Juan, whether in the shape of a permanent LJ Leadership Committee, a community of practice, or any number of other paths towards more profound and more consistent application of language justice culture and method. We thank NMAC for the opportunity to walk some of this path together.

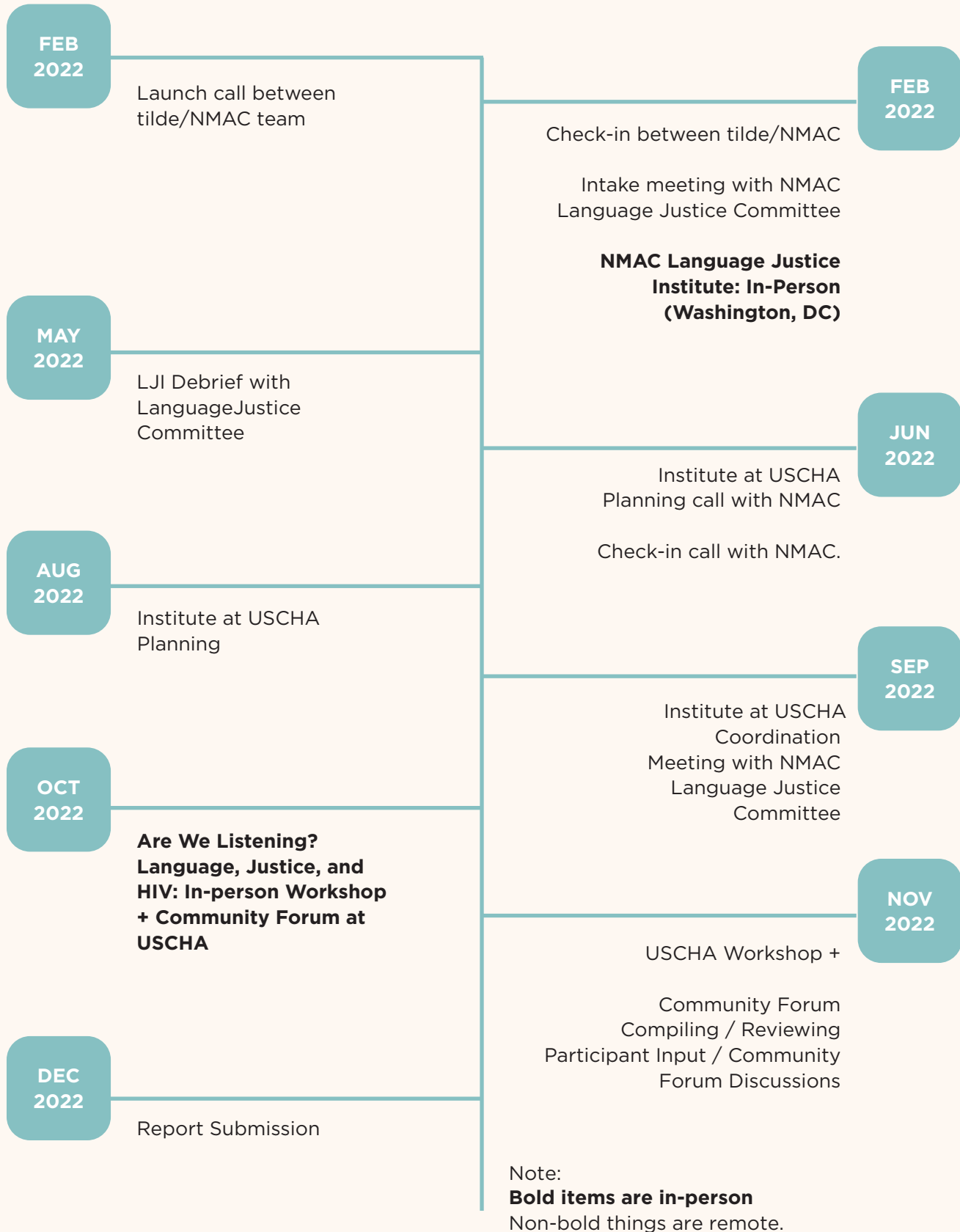
tilde Consultant Team:

Tony Macias

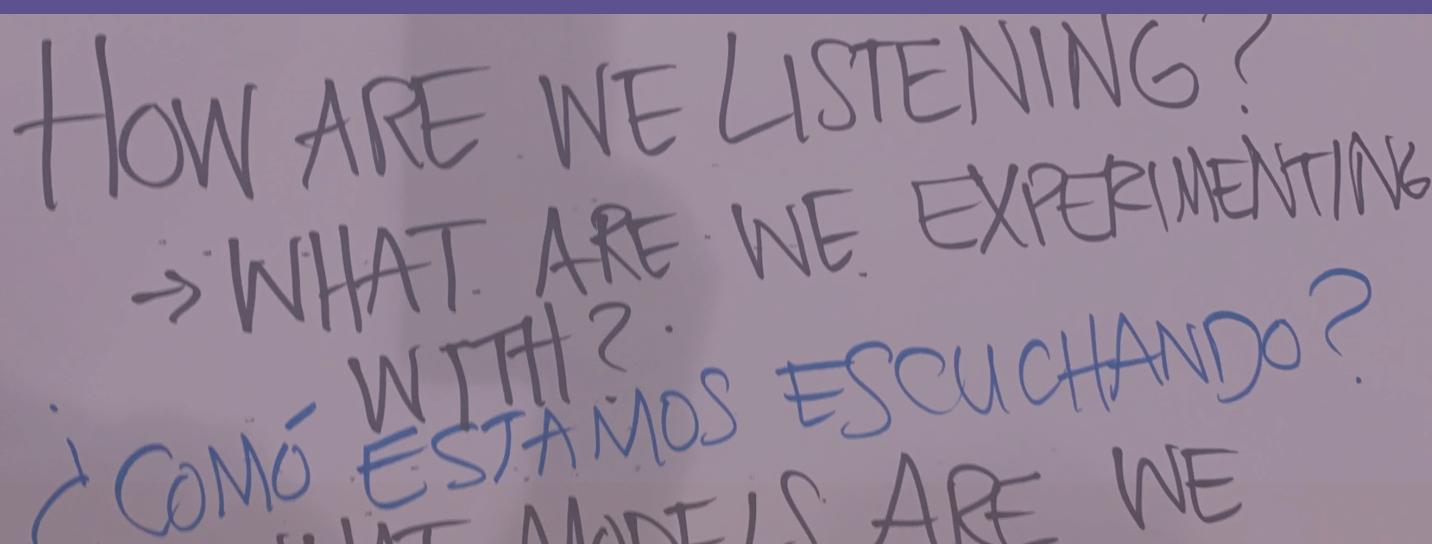
Alejandra Esparza Chong-Cuy

José Eduardo Sánchez

03 | TIMELINE



04 | CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES



Language Justice Institute - NMAC Staff Retreat

In March 2022, the Tilde consultant team traveled to Washington, DC, to facilitate an all-staff Language Justice Institute. This four-hour in-person training had two components:

1. an intro to language justice, and
2. a language justice listening and strategy session.

The introductory session helped NMAC team members build a shared connection and understanding of language justice (and Language Access), learn “better” practices, and begin a broad implementation conversation among NMAC staff.

In the second session, we invited participants to reflect on learnings from the intro session and find alignment with internal values and practices at NMAC. This session included a listening component to honor individual staff knowledge, stories, and experiences with language challenges, using evaluation to share power and develop offerings (critique+solutions) rooted in a shared commitment to organizational change.

Leading up to the Institute, the Tilde team met with NMAC’s language justice committee to present our initial institute agenda and listen to the Committee’s perspectives, concerns, and ideas to inform our workshop and the listening/strategy session plans.

The workshop was held in a circle in an open format to facilitate communication and participation among participants.

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Activities were rooted in participants' experiences and designed to generate a universal sense of connection to language justice, regardless of every individual's personal language story.


Reflections on NMAC Staff Input

> NMAC likes to lead:

NMAC has been a leader in racial justice within the HIV movement. Therefore, it was no surprise to witness the Staff's responsibility and desire to model language justice practice as part of that leadership role. NMAC has a culture of expertise and commands the attention of many audiences, including researchers, funders, advocates, policymakers, and direct service and prevention providers. During our workshop, Staff expressed the need to **confidently articulate language justice "in an NMAC way"** through a much deeper understanding of language justice practices, learning from other successful models, and taking an innovative approach.

> NMAC Capacity + Protocols

The Staff made a resounding call for language justice at NMAC to include a better understanding of **how language operates as a tool of power in NMAC work** and establish it as **a concrete feature of NMAC operations**. The Conference Team, in particular, identified specific and urgent needs related to capacity based on their recent experience with the Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit in Chicago and leading up to USCHA in Puerto Rico, including concrete operational support to coordinate the expanding volume of interpretation and translation needs up to and during USCHA, as well as the need for transparent workflows for related and dependent tasks requiring multiple steps and review. (e.g., What is the relationship between the Communications and Conference teams when developing and translating materials? What are the steps? Who is responsible for what? Who approves?)



"How can [NMAC] make language around health accessible for all communities? It's not a messaging issue, it's a listening issue!"

-NMAC Staff Member
at LJI Training

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

> LJ is already underway at NMAC:

Staff identified several existing language justice practices that help NMAC connect with and serve multilingual communities - many of them **driven by NMAC's current commitment to the Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MIPA)**. For example, the Treatment Division's two main programs, HIV 50+ Strong and Healthy and the Gay Men of Color Fellowship include multilingual approaches to increase language access (bilingual peer education, mini-grants, and social media strategy led by fellows). These components are tools of power used to shift the conversation about whose voices are experts (and elevated to drive critical discussions within the HIV movement).

> NMAC is a connector:

As a national organization touching on policy, research, advocacy, communications, funding, and community programming and convening, **NMAC uniquely connects and elevates many voices across the HIV movement.** NMAC often serves as an intermediary between a dynamic base of HIV organizations and communities on the one hand and decision-making institutions in positions of power. A move by NMAC to model and promote language justice work will have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts across the sector but also requires a thoughtful approach in light of diverse stakeholder needs and desires. NMAC can play to its strengths in devising a collaborative, equitable, and open-source strategy for designing, resourcing, and implementing language justice internally and in the arenas where it would have the most significant impact.

What is next?

Language justice at NMAC: Show, Do not Tell

Moving out of the in-person Language Justice Institute, we noted a clear desire to implement the lessons learned in NMAC's upcoming work. For example, Staff signaled USCHA as a crucial opportunity to harness the energy and momentum from the training and explore how NMAC's internal language justice conversations could echo and connect to the broader HIV movement. Tilde

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

would work alongside NMAC staff to host the following discussion at an institute session at USCHA. The Conferences Division would lead the entire Staff, board, and numerous volunteers in implementing the first USCHA in a Spanish-speaking setting, with some of the language justice best practices at the forefront (Translation, Interpretation, Flipping the Script, and others). USCHA would be an excellent opportunity for NMAC to step into its role as leader and connector and to test and scale many language justice practices to meet the needs and contexts of USCHA in 2022. What remains to be worked on after the dust settles on USCHA are the more profound transformative questions regarding LJ's vision and operations at NMAC.

Capacity-Building Activities continued

USCHA 2022

On October 8, 2022, tilde trainers held an institute at USCHA titled **“Are we listening? Language, Justice, and HIV: Workshop + Community Forum”**. The Institute consisted of two sessions: Part I was a one-hour workshop to build a shared understanding of language justice principles and practices, and Part II was a 90-minute community forum held in partnership with NMAC staff and with the support of representatives from the Latino Commission on AIDS and NC AIDS Action Network. The meeting centered on the title question of our Institute, “Are we listening?” and had the following goals:

- Highlight the language justice/MIPA work already being done and led by different ASOs and communities.
- Participants share challenges, lessons learned, and hopes for the future of their work.
- Deepen curiosity, excitement, and connections among participants and illuminate the possibilities of a movement to end the epidemic informed and strengthened by LJ practices.

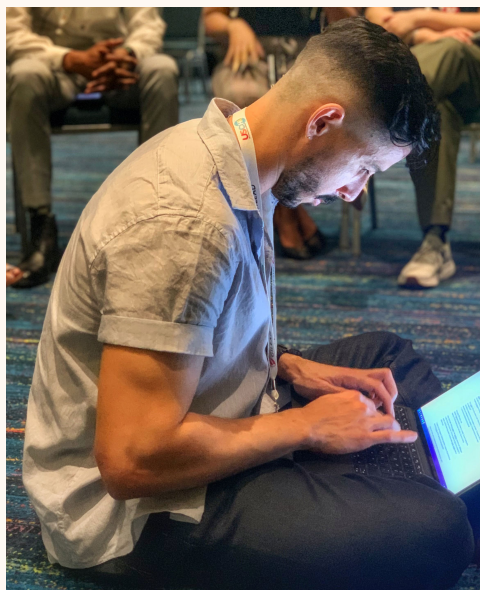
As the largest gathering in the US, the US Conference on HIV and AIDS was a unique opportunity to offer a workshop and Forum on the intersections of the language justice and the HIV movement. In addition, many valuable concurrent sessions took place at the same time as our Institute, and the strong attendance for our session (40-50 individuals over 3 hours) indicates the current relevance of and broad curiosity around language justice.

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

In both sessions, participants sat in a circle in an open format that encouraged multilingual dialog among participants and presenters (Spanish<>English) with the help of multiple interpreters and notetakers. We opened the Institute with a language justice announcement to explain the multilingual nature of the session and encourage participants to each play a part in leveling the linguistic playing field.* Similar to our March training, we enjoyed active participation across the audience, especially in sharing lived experiences of language-related challenges at the individual and organizational levels.

*See the Resources section in the report Appendix for the bilingual script we used for our LJ announcement. In practice, the announcement goes beyond the immediate goal of explanation/orientation to the rules of a multilingual gathering. Its deeper intention is to interrupt a persistent and often harmful dynamic wherein monolingual speakers of the dominant language (English) abdicate responsibility and even interest in supporting multilingual dialogue. By inviting all participants, regardless of language(s) spoken, to use some simple embodied practices to participate in maintaining language equity during the session, our deeper goal is to promote and demystify the notion that everyone has something to say, and a role to play, in promoting LJ.

Both the workshop and community forum portions elicited participant input, encouraging them to share examples of problems, successes, and lingering questions with one another to create a sense of shared experience and generate a range of creative responses. In one instance, that response went beyond our workshop: Marc Meachem of ViiV Healthcare was moved enough by the session that he spoke about his workshop experience during a keynote address on



the following day- renewing the call made by other speakers during USCHA for increased recognition, creative thinking, and funding to support language justice in efforts to End the Epidemic.

We recorded participant input during the workshop and the breakout forum sessions in two ways: Notetakers kept close notes of the forum conversations,* and participants wrote individual commitments and lingering questions on sticky notes at the end of both sessions.

*We thank Damián for careful note-taking during the Forum!

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Six Reflections on USCHA Participant Input

The forum notes revealed various concerns and insights, summarized below. Additional insights from individual commitments and participant questions were in Appendix A's sticky notes.

- 01 Participants have manifold concerns around language injustices, **expressing real frustration with organizational leadership that does not listen**. One participant spoke of the role of their organizational administration around language services in this way: "It hasn't gone anywhere, not seen as a necessity. They are not seeing what is happening in the clinic because they are in their offices. They are not listening." Another participant revealed that multilingual organizations are not necessarily doing a better job with language justice work: "Staff has gone to admin, but they have not done much... Everybody speaks Spanish, but admin does not realize the need."
- 02 Some participants mentioned a need to identify professional language services for their organizations, while others identified **examples of harm from poor quality language service provision**. Therefore, any strategy for hiring or providing language services in-house must ensure quality via built-in components for evaluation and end-user feedback.
- 03 We noted a low general awareness among participants of MIPA as a concept and the concerns and potential solutions; participants offered primarily focused on the experiences of non-dominant language speakers and the Staff serving them. During the training, we presented a theory of change model and practical example to better link the two concepts, along with a definition of **HIV+MIPA: "An ever-evolving framework and set of practices that ensure that people living with HIV can lead, communicate, and participate fully in HIV movement-building and in their communities, regardless of the languages or linguistic variants they use."** We also saw opportunities to name the role of LJ in achieving MIPA, mainly when participants spoke to "elevating community" and "lack of representation at the table," but more education is needed to help service providers and advocates draw a stronger connection between these concepts at the root of our practice.

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

- 04 Participants with more experience implementing LJ offered perspectives to others around the **long-term effort and resources required to shift organizational culture and practice**. For example, Donte Prayer, discussion co-moderator from NC AIDS Action Network, referenced the need to “give us time” to implement changes. In another take on the role of slowing down, one participant identified the need to sit with patients with limited English proficiency while noting that this took “too much energy” in the hectic service setting. The contradiction between urgency and needing the time for a more relational approach is a question of organizational culture and practice determined by low time and human resources. One answer is increasing the capacity to meet identified needs better.



“I would like to keep the conversation going. NMAC should make this a requirement for the conference.”

- 05 Participants repeatedly spoke about **the need for increased funding for language services**. Discussion co-moderators Judith Montenegro and Carla Mena from the Latino Commission on AIDS referenced their 10% rule-of-thumb for the language services line item in all program budgets. However, they noted that while funded services worked well in formal settings, there was still a need for support in numerous multilingual interactions on a small scale. Other participants referenced a similar issue with front-office Staff needing more help to ensure short first-time interactions with multilingual patients went well and did not lead to harm. Any funding and training interventions must account for multilingual “micro-interactions” alongside more formal language services like interpretation and translation.

- 06 Workshop participants expressed **eagerness to receive more training, advice, and communication with peers**. Given the number of technical questions when implementing language services, ongoing mentoring and thought partnership with expert practitioners are necessary, especially for organizations implementing language justice practices for the first time. This desire for expert advice and the lively back-and-forth between session participants indicate potential solid interest in a peer network for idea-sharing and moral support, something that NMAC might consider convening at future USCHA meetings or possibly host throughout the year in collaboration with partners like the Latino Commission on AIDS.

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Best Practices for ASOs

Based on our training experience, we offer best practices in 6 categories, which together can form the basis of a Language Justice and MIPA toolkit to be used by AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) within a more comprehensive assessment and training effort:

01 Staff training and recognition - a great way to create shared ownership and understanding of LJ practice, and shows investment in Staff professional growth. Hiring, compensating, and evaluating the language proficiency of Staff who know more than one language is also an essential step in organizational investment in language infrastructure.

02 Listening Process - a necessary early step in evaluating needs, setting priorities, and ensuring participation of those most impacted by HIV. Engaging frontline Staff as experts in “micro-interactions” is also crucial to receiving insights toward successful intervention.

03 Evaluation and Feedback - The planning and implementation of language justice problem-solving require thoughtful evaluation with clear and measurable indicators of success. End-user comments (via multilingual surveys, focus groups, or a suggestion box) are also critical.

04 Community Leadership Opportunities - Invitation to authentic leadership via employment, PLWHIV-led advisory bodies, and volunteer roles are essential for achieving MIPA, and a source for proposing and evaluating language justice interventions.

05 LJ Funding - Organizations must raise sufficient funds for ongoing staff training, hiring language service providers, and increasing multilingual staffing capacity for both large-scale programmatic needs and the “micro-interactions” that can make a difference in multilingual service provision.

06 Communities of practice - Conference gatherings, caucuses, email groups, and training cohorts are all possible tools for building a community of practice. These activities would help organizations starting and those with more experience to share resources and act as thought partners as they implement language justice.

05 | LANGUAGE JUSTICE AT USCHA 2022



As first-time attendees at USCHA, we appreciated the size, spectacle, venue, and community spirit we saw over the five days of the conference. The hardworking professionalism of the NMAC staff was evident everywhere we looked, and we are grateful for the approachability and responsiveness they showed around the preparation for our institute session. We offer the following insights in that same spirit of appreciation and collaboration and are open to a deeper dive at a future date if there is interest.

Interpreter Selection

The firm hired (Lighthouse) brought high-quality interpretation services to USCHA 2022, with sufficient interpreters to work in pairs and coordinators who capably managed the equipment distribution and troubleshooting. As is often the case with professional conference interpreters, however, those assigned to this conference did not appear to have a solid connection to the topic or the community around them and, while they covered general topics quite skillfully, did not consistently render the specialized language of HIV advocacy, prevention, and treatment. One better practice would be to recruit skilled interpreters with social movement experience and, to the extent possible, who represent HIV+ and LGBTQ or other populations directly impacted by language injustice.* These language workers would be more familiar with the topics and better generate trust with the conference audience, who must listen to them for long periods to participate in sessions fully.

Interpreter Preparation

Interpreters needed a way to receive presentation materials before each session for preparation. Translated workshop materials were only sometimes available for attendees, too. One better practice is to request the timely sharing of prep materials in any

LANGUAGE JUSTICE AT USCHA 2022

communication with workshop facilitators and create folders where to access those materials by interpreters well in advance of each session. Another better practice is to offer a “translation pipeline” so NMAC can ensure that workshop materials are available in both conference languages. Finally, develop a collaborative “living bilingual glossary” for USCHA, added to and adapted over time, and become an invaluable resource for language workers, presenters, and attendees.

Language Justice Coordination

The efforts made by Lighthouse and NMAC staff during the conference were heroic (We are looking at you, Alison). They need not be, however, and we understand the institutional reliance on heroism as further evidence in support of our recommendation to resource-up: hiring a competent interpretation and equipment rental provider and a Language Justice Coordinator who could manage interpreter selection and preparation, scheduling, translations, equipment distribution and return, participant feedback. One more dedicated and experienced coordinator supporting the Conference Division in the months leading up to USCHA and during the conference itself would be a big step forward in language justice practice at USCHA.

*Some organizers, including José Romero, have expressed a desire to recruit, train, and hire HIV+ interpreters to fill the service needs of the sector better and provide viable employment options for multilingual people living with HIV. The Latino Commission on AIDS also has a project to train professional interpreters on the specific challenges, vocabulary, and themes common to the HIV sector. Over time, this type of selection and training effort will begin to fill the critical gap in qualified language workers who understand the ins and outs of HIV and who come from the PLWHIV community.

06 | RECOMMENDATIONS



The reflections we offer in this report merit a deeper dive, and we look forward to further conversation with the NMAC Language Justice Committee and others in the HIV space to further think, refine, and propose a coherent set of perspectives and strategies for LJ in our shared efforts toward MIPA and Ending the Epidemic.

We have one more set of ideas centered on this question: What to do to create the operational infrastructure required to institutionalize language justice practice across NMAC and best use the momentum gained during 2022? What follows is a list of priorities that we have identified and offer in the spirit of solidarity and continuous improvement:

1. Increase Capacity for Language Justice Leadership at NMAC

The work of the LJ Committee has waxed and waned as staff capacity has allowed. The Committee should become a permanent staff body within NMAC and retain the broad staff participation it has enjoyed during 2021 and 2022. The sample LJ Committee Meeting Template in Appendix E is one tool to help the Committee keep to a regular meeting schedule, normalize discussions around LJ wins and challenges within the organization, and track tasks and learning over time. The role of this team can continue to be to assess needs, propose ways to implement best practices and support the evaluation of ongoing efforts toward continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NMAC needs to contract an external Language Justice Coordinator in the lead-up and execution of significant events, supporting the Conferences Division to pull off convenings in a linguistically-democratic manner.

If not already practiced at NMAC, we suggest adding multilingual skills and responsibilities to staff member job descriptions and work plans to increase the visibility of essential multilingual work in the organization and acknowledge/compensate for the time and energy consumed by that work. For example, suppose staffers are interpreting, translating, communicating/interacting in languages other than English as a part of their regular job. In that case, those skills can be evaluated and improved over time only if recognized on paper.

High-quality multilingual programming already exists in several areas of NMAC. We recommend exploring how language services may enhance the organization's outward-facing work, especially in policy advocacy, where NMAC should have considered a multilingual approach. We encourage NMAC to explore budgeting for fully multilingual programming in the future based on strategic priorities identified by Staff, leadership, and constituents.

2. Enhance Language Justice Policies and Procedures

Organizations that use Language Services Request Workflow benefit from a clear workflow for translation and interpretation, including a written protocol for Staff to use when contracting services. This workflow includes guidelines around request timing, approval process, communication, budgeting, and a list of approved and vetted vendors. As an organization with substantial multilingual staffing, the workflow at NMAC could also include roles for internal staffers approved for translation and interpretation, especially for quick-turnaround requests. We strongly recommend training staff on the “why” and the “how” of this workflow as a key to success whenever hiring new Staff and at least once a year for the entire Staff.

Language Services Budgeting support- Each staffer responsible for annual budgeting in their area of work would benefit from specific guidelines and support around budgeting for language services. A possible rule of thumb would be 10% of program costs (the calculation used by the Latino Commission

on AIDS); however, the specific percentages will vary depending on the type of programming and services needed. In any case, Staff will need time at least annually for visioning and strategizing around the role of language services in enhancing their overall programmatic goals. An ideal time to insert the question of language justice budgeting would be when Staff evaluate prior work's effectiveness and move toward budgeting and planning for the future.

3. *Language Justice Strategic Planning*

As with any topic that generates immediate inspiration and resonance across a community, language justice faces the risk of diluted impact if deployed without a clear understanding of its origin as a call to challenge the status quo; it is transformative potential reduced into irrelevance. The many moments of inspiration we witnessed at USCHA and in our engagement with NMAC staff over 2022 point to the enormous potential that language justice brings and signal the possibility of it becoming merely the next buzzword. Much like the origin story of NMAC in the call to take racism seriously in the fight against AIDS, the organization has taken up the call for language justice in the struggle for MIPA. After a year of engagement with tilde training, after a successful USCHA held in a Spanish-speaking context, and in light of the convening role we played together at the “Are We Listening?” Institute, **NMAC, is better equipped than ever to speak the organizational love language of strategic planning for language justice.** The specific commitments and broad enthusiasm for language justice we experienced throughout our time together must find a home in the strategic priorities of NMAC, where they stand a more substantial chance of becoming part of the organization's DNA.

*We have not requested or seen examples of NMAC Operations manuals or policies, so the recommendations under this heading can be read as “whole-cloth” interventions or as suggested enhancements to what already exists

07 | CONCLUSION



Our training and accompaniment process has left us with several questions: As it looks to future programming and convening, how can NMAC staff and leadership bring a strong vision for language justice (always tied to MIPA) into the conversation at every level of operations and planning? How can it use its expertise to develop further synergies between racial justice, language justice, and MIPA? How might NMAC use its convening power to host a community of practice around these intersections and engage funders to provide necessary resources? As NMAC seeks answers to these and other emerging questions, we look forward to future opportunities for dialogue and thought partnership with NMAC at the programmatic and organizational levels.

[Quiero] seguir luchando por un futuro en el cual nuestros programas e instituciones tengan desde el inicio un marco de justicia lingüística."

"[I want to] keep fighting for a future in which our programs and institutions have a language justice framework from the outset."

- "Are We Listening?" session participant



- a. [LAFLA Language Justice Protocols Assessment](#)
- b. [Sample Baseline Organizational Assessment](#)
- c. [CCHE - Language Justice Toolkit](#)
- d. [Language Justice Coops + Collectives Directory](#)
- e. [LJ Committee Meeting Template](#)
- f. [Language Justice Intro Script](#)
- g. [Are We Listening? Workshop Participant Input Stickies](#)
- h. [Are We Listening? Community Forum Discussion Circle Notes](#)

