Vermont Language Assistance Services for Emergency Communications (LASEC) Working Group

Meeting #2 Minutes from Friday, July 19, 2024 | 2:00-3:00PM via Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Eric Forand (VEM), Brett Larose (VEM), Laura Seigel (D/HH/DB Services), Alison Segar (VLJP), Amber Leventry (VDH), Brendan Kinney (VT Public), Joe Tymecki (VT Public), Wendy Mays (VAB)

1) Wendy read aloud a reminder about the working group's purpose and shared a concern that the working group would not get what it needs to get done by December 15th unless the scope of the project remains focused on only these tasks as named in the statute:
   a) develop best practices for the provision of language assistance services in emergency communications during and after all-hazards events as defined in 2 V.S.A. § 2
   b) analyze and make recommendations on the appropriate uses of technologies for providing these services, including tools such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and Picture-in-Picture (PIP) techniques and automated language translation services or machine translation.
   c) identify geographical areas within the State with the greatest needs for language assistance services during and after all-hazards events.
   d) Writing and submitting a report to the legislature.

2) Identifying Known Issues with Emergency Communications:
   a) Wendy asked if all working group members had added to and/or edited their organizations identified issues in the Excel spreadsheet and asked if any new issues had been revealed during the most recent occurrence of flooding.
      i) The working group discussed radio being an audio platform and Laura asked if emergency information that gets relayed could be transcribed and posted on a station's website? Joe said Vermont Public has been looking into the technology that could potentially enable that.
      ii) At Brendan's suggestion, we added a "Financial Implications" column to the spreadsheet.
   b) At Brendan's suggestion, the working group decided this meeting was the right time to go through the Excel spreadsheet, look at each issue and determine if the issue fits the focused scope of this group's work. Based on working group member feedback, some were deleted, some were incorporated into other issues and some new issues were added.
      i) The idea of creating one centralized, easy to access website, where all information during an emergency can be found in all needed languages, kept coming up. We're "putting a pin" in that idea so we can explore how that might work.
   c) Alison presented a summary of Jay Greene's emailed request about including community outreach to people with language access needs to support this project.
      i) Whereas the working group agrees it would be helpful to know which communication platforms people with language access needs go to during times of emergency, there seemed to be concern by the majority of group members that adding an organized community outreach effort to the scope of work is logistically not feasible for this working group. In addition, because the legislature did not provide any funds, there is no money to compensate leaders for their time.
      ii) Alison suggested that the community outreach could be as simple as inviting leaders of communities with language access needs to a future meeting and giving them 5 minutes each to speak on behalf of the community they represent.

      iii)   The group seemed to agree that is more feasible as long as ORE and VLJP are willing to coordinate that scheduling. Wendy suggested as an alternative that ORE and VLJP jointly ask their leader contacts which communication platforms people with language access needs use regularly and present what they learn to the working group.

3) Brendan suggested that members of the working group take turns recording meeting minutes as it is a challenge for Wendy to both facilitate and take notes. Brendan volunteered to take notes at the next meeting where he is present and more volunteers in the future are appreciated.

4) Meeting adjourned at 3:08 PM