NEW YORK CITY MAYOR'S OFFICE OF THE CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
Increasing Content Accessibility for Multilingual Communities

THE CHALLENGE – Develop (ideally open source) tools to help serve the increasingly multilingual community in NYC and in cities nationwide, enabling them to access government resources for an equitable recovery to the impacts of COVID-19.

EXECUTIVE CHAMPION – John Paul Farmer, Chief Technology Officer, New York City Mayor's Office

THE PROBLEM – With more than 3 million foreign-born residents from more than 200 different countries, New York City is home to one of the most diverse populations in the world. New Yorkers come from every corner of the globe and speak over 200 different languages. Nearly one-half of all New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home, and almost 25% -- or 1.8 million people -- are not English Proficient. In crisis response and recovery, critical public health and operational information must be delivered in multiple languages. Facts emerge on a rolling basis, and information changes quickly, but new information is currently shared first and primarily in English -- making it difficult to ensure that the millions of non- English Proficient residents are able to receive critical information in a timely manner. In an emergency situation, and during an economic recovery from crises such as COVID-19, if people lack equal access to usable information, how can we ensure an equitable recovery?

THE OPPORTUNITY – Managing rapidly changing content, and subsequent translations, is extremely difficult. For example, one public-facing service **updated COVID-19 public health content 114 times in eight weeks.** This doesn't include translation, which typically is very time intensive and is thus often done later, so as not to delay the release of critical government information. Beyond crisis response, the issue of language access touches every aspect of public-facing services, such as issues related to immigrant affairs and civic participation, which are particularly critical and relevant for non-English speaking residents. To address this need, this sprint challenges teams to create technical resources that help local governments to keep content constantly in sync across multiple languages (including translating government-speak into "plain language English"), and potentially other tools that help provide the most timely and accurate information to residents in their own languages.

VISION FOR SPRINT OUTCOMES

→ Teams in this sprint explore the creation of an open source data pipeline that moves digital content to one or more translation tools, and back into content management systems, for the benefit of any public-facing agency delivering digital content in multiple languages.
→ Residents of New York City can access all resources equitably; all content is available to all major language groups without significant intervention from content creators.

TARGET END USERS - Local governments and NGOs who need to communicate with diverse language speakers in the United States. The majority of target users will be people who manage digital and print

content within public-facing institutions. The ultimate beneficiaries of this initiative are non-English Proficient people, who will benefit by having continuously translated content available to them in the language of their choosing.

RELATED DATA SETS

- ↳ Code base: Project ELSA, a tested proof of concept built by the NYC CTO team, usable as a starting point or reference
- ↳ All written content on NYC government websites. Examples to be provided in the sprint include data sources and workflows in Wordpress, Google Docs, Microsoft Word, and code living in GitHub.
- ↳ Language Spoken at Home, English Proficiency, & World Region of Birth, American Community Survey, Census Bureau
- ↳ Data on touchpoints with government (e.g., SNAP data, Medicaid enrollment data)

LEAD POINTS OF CONTACT

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