



2016

Company/Organization: Language Bank

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Challenge or Opportunity:

A 2014 study in the peer reviewed publication of the National Association for Healthcare Quality indicates that improper language interpretation is a leading cause of medical errors. This means that across New Hampshire's many hospitals, misunderstanding, misdiagnosis, inability to follow treatment plans, and inadequately informed consent can result when professionally trained language interpreters are not used during medical appointments. As if that wasn't bad enough, from the hospital's perspective, this can also lead to increased patient time, longer ER stays, higher costs, and other unnecessary waste.

Serving the Limited English Proficient ("LEP") population with professional language interpreters is a more pressing challenge today than it was yesterday, and tomorrow it will matter even more.

Here's why: According to the US Census, in New Hampshire, 70% of people with limited English proficiency are foreign born. According to the Migration Policy Institute, the foreign born population in the state is growing eight times faster than the U.S. born population. It should be no surprise that both the number and percentage of new arrivals to the United States with limited English proficiency is increasing. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are approximately 60 million people of concern worldwide looking for a new home: stateless, internally displaced, asylum-seekers, and refugees. The U.S. historically receives the largest number of immigrants worldwide, and so the need for high quality professional language interpretation in New Hampshire will only increase.

A solution is needed to turn this challenge into an opportunity.

Approach or Solution:

Language Bank is the solution. Language Bank, a subsidiary of the community non-profit Ascentria Care Alliance, provides professional language interpretation to hospitals in New Hampshire. Unlike competitors who use freelancers of varying credentials to provide interpretation, Language Bank is a social enterprise that trains and employs its interpreters, including refugees and other new Americans. For NH hospitals, legal institutions and businesses, Language Bank provides reliable, consistent, and high quality communication services. For Ascentria, Language Bank provides vital funding to support a variety

of community programs including foster care and adoption, services for refugees including unaccompanied children, teen parents, and those with developmental disabilities.

Language Bank achieves a social mission through a market-based fee-for-service delivery model. It therefore not only empowers new Americans but also provides an invaluable service to the community.

Impact:

In the past year, Language Bank's 200+ interpreters provided more than 38,000 interpretation appointments to over 250 organizations in nearly 60 languages. Most of Language Bank's customers are in the healthcare industry; in fact, they include eight out of New Hampshire's 10 largest hospitals. In a 2015 customer survey, 72% of respondents said that Language Bank's control of quality by training and employing its interpreters is important.

Language Bank has trained more than 100 refugees and other New Americans as professional language interpreters. Since the New Hampshire market wage for professional language interpretation is nearly 2.5 times the New Hampshire base compensation earned by new refugee arrivals, Language Bank not only empowers new Americans and creates jobs, but contributes tens of thousands of higher federal income tax revenue for a stronger economy.

In the past year, Language Bank provided interpretation services for more than 10,000 individuals. Through leveraging the linguistic skills and talents of new Americans, New Hampshire's Language Bank, has been recognized across America as a model social enterprise. Requests to start-up "a Language Bank" have come from places as diverse as New Mexico and Nebraska, and Language Bank staff have spoken at conferences from Boston to Chicago to San Jose. All it took was just one thing—a solution from Ascentria Care Alliance – to recognize and utilize the unique talents and skills of New Hampshire's newest Americans.