



CITY OF MADISON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Zoom Interpretation Feature Policy

Overview

Effective: 05/01/2022

Objective: Establish a policy for interpretation in Zoom

Contact: IT Meeting Support, meetingsupport@cityofmadison.com

Purpose

The Zoom interpretation feature allows for meeting hosts to assign language interpreters in their meetings or webinars. The host can designate an interpreter to provide their own audio channel for the language they are translating to.

This feature is very complex and has some significant limitations that must be acknowledged before deciding to use it. The following document outlines the Information Technology (IT) Department's policy on the Zoom interpretation feature and the limitations staff should be aware of in coordination with the City's [Language Access Program](#).

Definitions

The following definitions will be used for the purposes of this document:

- **Consecutive interpretation** means the speaker pauses after every few sentences and allows the interpreter to translate. This is commonly used in small meetings and legal proceedings, including arbitrations, depositions, hearings, and trials.
- **Host** means the person acting as the host role in Zoom. This person may or may not be leading the event, but is acting as a technical facilitator within Zoom.
- **Simultaneous interpretation** means the interpreter translates while the speaker is talking. This is usually used in non-legal proceedings and larger meetings where attendees can select the language they want to listen to on a listening device.

Policy

Instructions

Standard instructions should be provided to interpreters and those requesting interpretation. Instructions will outline how to use the feature and best practices. The Department of Civil Rights (DCR) is responsible for distributing these instructions. The instructions should be provided in the requestor's preferred language. The user instructions should be provided again immediately before turning on the feature, during the meeting/event.

Meetings/Events Permitted

The Zoom Interpretation Feature and virtual simultaneous interpretation is **not** permitted for board, commission, or committee (BCC) meetings. Public meetings/events with one-directional communication may use the Zoom Interpretation Feature to facilitate simultaneous interpretation virtually. If any bi-directional communication is expected at the meeting/event, the agency must consult IT staff at least two (2) weeks prior to the event to determine if and how simultaneous interpretation will work for the event.

Scheduling Interpreters

DCR is responsible for scheduling interpreters, so please contact lap@cityofmadison.com or DCR at (608) 266-4910. Requests for BCC meetings need to occur at least forty-eight (48) hours before the meeting needing interpretation. The public speaking time limit is doubled to allow for the translation at BCC and Common Council meetings (see MGO Sec. 2.29(3)).

Deadlines for all other types of meetings can be found in the [Language Access Program](#).

After the interpreters are scheduled, the Host needs to receive the interpreters' email addresses, what language they are interpreting, what type of interpretation, what item are they interpreting for (or the entire meeting), and who the requestor is (ASL interpretation only). The sooner this information is relayed the better.

Closed Captions

Due to [RES-16-00741](#), the City is prohibited from using machine-generated interpretation for official communications, including meetings. This means that Zoom's built-in closed caption generator is prohibited from use. However, if live translation is needed for a meeting/event, a request can be made through the Language Access Program.

Consecutive Interpretation

The Zoom interpretation feature is not necessary for consecutive interpretation. The interpreter simply needs to be unmuted at the same time as the member of the public. In webinar, the Host will promote them to panelist and allow them to unmute themselves when they are needed. Virtual consecutive interpretation can be done at any meeting/event provided the Host understands the logistics of facilitating it. Note that consecutive interpretation typically lengthens a discussion by twice the original amount without interpretation.

Consecutive & Simultaneous Interpretation

IT assistance is required for any meeting or event that requires both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. If you are not recording and are only using one language, IT assistance is not required, provided the Host has technical training on the Zoom interpretation feature from IT prior to the meeting/event.

Simultaneous Interpretation

The Zoom interpretation feature is intended for simultaneous interpretation. When the meeting or webinar starts, instructions for use should be provided in all languages, then the Host can

start the interpretation feature, which will allow the interpreters to provide their own audio channels for the language they are translating to. Participants select the audio channel to hear the translated audio in their language of choice. Virtual simultaneous interpretation is not permitted for BCC meetings.

Limitations of Simultaneous Interpretation

1. The Zoom interpretation feature is **NOT** available for:
 - Phone-in participants
 - Breakout rooms
 - Instant meetings
 - Personal ID meetings
 - Live streaming
 - Recordings
 - Bi-directional communication in multiple languages
2. The interpretation feature must be enabled when the meeting is scheduled and cannot be enabled once the meeting has started.
3. Only the Host of the meeting can initiate and manage the interpretation feature, and must be on the Zoom desktop client to do so.

Sign Language Interpretation

The Zoom interpretation feature is not necessary for ASL or other signed language interpretation since it is intended for auditory languages only. The host will need to provide instructions to the requestor on how to pin the video of an interpreter in the Zoom meeting. If using webinar, the requestor will need to be promoted to panelist.