

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 3 August 1998

TO/DEST. Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Social Services Commissioner

SUBJECT/OBJET **REVIEW OF LANGUAGES OF LIFE INC. FUNDING
REQUEST**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Social Services Department recommends that no funding be allocated to Languages of Life Inc. for 1998.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise the Community Services Committee on the results of the Social Services Department's review of the Languages of Life's request for funding.

BACKGROUND

At the Community Services Committee meeting on July 16, 1998 the Languages of Life requested approval for a \$25,000 grant. The Committee in turn passed the following motion:

“That this item be referred to the Social Services Department for a report that will include the needs of the Department, the Ottawa-Carleton Police Service and our clients for cultural interpretation and translation services.”

During July 1998, the Social Services Department conducted a review of the Languages of Life financial statement and client service level statistics. To facilitate this process, the agency provided the Department with their 1996 and 1997 Financial Statements and quarterly client service level statistics. The agency was not able to provide a 1997 annual report or a 1998 service plan, as requested by the Department.

DISCUSSION

Description of Languages of Life Service

Languages of Life was established as a non-profit, charitable organisation offering language interpretation and translation services in over 150 languages and dialects to healthcare and social services agencies, law enforcement organizations and the business community. The agency has been operating in the Ottawa-Carleton Region since 1979. Initially, the Languages of Life Inc was established to serve the healthcare sector. It has expanded to other sectors.

Currently, the organisation provides 24 -hour- a- day translation and interpretation services to the Children's Aid Society, the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and other agencies. According to the 1997 service statistics, Languages of Life responded to 528 requests for service and served 1,757 individuals.

The organisation's services are co-ordinated through two full-time employees. As indicated by the agency, staff have developed a network of over 600 qualified interpreters/translators. The agency ensures that all the interpreters are linguistically qualified, reliable and discreet through a screening process. The interpreters sign confidentiality forms and criminal reference checks are completed. No direct training support is provided by the organization.

Funding History

Based on the Languages of Life's 1996 and 1997 Financial Statements, the organization received grants from the City of Ottawa in the amount of \$25,000 a year to respond to calls from various non-profit organizations. Regional Police Services also gave grants in the amount of \$9,000 in 1995 and \$20,000 in 1996. Most of these funds were utilized to cover operating costs. The cultural interpretation services were provided by volunteers.

In 1996 the Police Services adopted a fee for service with the agency to replace the grant arrangements. Funds through the City of Ottawa were eliminated in 1997 due to budget restraints.

Current Situation

Currently, Languages of Life is in the process of a transition from grant funding to a fee for service structure. The organization has adopted a new fee for service structure and interpreters/translators will be paid an hourly rate. These changes have created difficulties for the agency's ability to manage its operation.

The organization is requesting \$25,000 for 1998 from RMOC to cover costs related to rent and utilities. Various fund-raising activities are anticipated for 1999. However, there is no business plan developed to specify the fund raising activities or the use of the funds. In addition, the changes required to sustain the services in the coming year are not established.

Given the organisation's lack of a detailed business and fundraising plans, the Department is concerned that the one time grant being requested will neither sustain the organization nor be limited to one year.

The Social Services Department Approach

The Social Services Department recognizes that cultural interpretation and translation services are essential to facilitate communication between the mainstream service delivery agencies and the users of service from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

The Department has experienced an increase in demand for cultural interpretation services since the 1980's. Services provided by the Department require that clients clearly understand the legal implications of the rules and regulations of the welfare legislation. Cultural interpretation and translation services are critical to facilitate communication with the clients. The Department is accountable to the community, the public and politicians in ensuring that clients have the opportunity to express their needs and concerns effectively.

Prior to 1993, the Department relied on clients' relatives, friends, volunteers and/or other agency's staff to provide these services. However, in most cases the interpreters did not have the knowledge and understanding of the rules and regulations of the welfare system and so the services provided were not reliable and consistent. In cases where relatives or volunteers provided the services, conflict of interest was an issue, as was confidentiality. To address these problems, the Department purchased services from community agencies. A review of these services provided by the community determined that they did not meet the Provincial guideline.

In the early 1990's, the need for appropriate cultural interpretation and translation services became apparent to the Department and the community. The Cultural Interpretation and Translation Committee of the Ethnic and Visible Minority Forum under the Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton conducted a feasibility study in 1993 to determine the need for cultural interpretation services. The study recommended that a non-profit centralized interpretation service be established. Accordingly, the Cultural Interpretation Services of Ottawa-Carleton (CISOC) was established as a non-profit organization. The Department provided a resource person to help build the community's service capacity.

The Department entered into a fee for service agreement with CISOC in 1993 to maintain consistent and quality service. CISOC's services conform with the Provincial guidelines. The services are provided through interpreters who have been :

1. tested for competencies in the languages they are working in as interpreter;

2. completed the basic cultural interpretation training program, which covers
 - a) professionalism, including roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, neutrality,
 - b) interpreting skills and cultural bridging techniques,
 - c) information on major user organizations, such as the Social Services Department.

Interpreters register with CISOC as trained interpreters and are under a pledge of confidentiality.

Currently, the Department purchases cultural interpretation and translation services from CISOC through a purchase of service arrangement. The agreement specifies that CISOC utilizes trained interpreters who are under contract to work for CISOC; to facilitate communication between the service recipients and the RMO Social Services Department. This agreement allows CISOC to adjust or modify its procedure in order to better meet the needs of the clients and the Department. The Department understands that the interpreters are well supported and are financially compensated for their services. CISOC maintains a list of professionally trained interpreters to provide services to Departmental clients and other members of the community. The services through CISOC are available on a 24 hour call basis.

The translation services are provided through certified or associate members of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO) or translators who have accreditation through the Public Works or Immigration Review Board or the (ATIO).

The Department's annual reviews of the services provided, indicates that the Department is satisfied with the services provided. The fee for service arrangement has allowed the Department the flexibility to ensure that services provided maintain quality and professional standard.

The Police Services' Approach

The Police Service has utilized cultural interpretation services provided by Languages of Life since 1986. Over the years, the Police Service has developed a good working relationship with the organization, as well as, with its interpreters. The Police Services indicate satisfaction with the services provided by CISOC.

CONCLUSION

Given the history of the level of satisfaction that the Department has with the fee for service arrangement with CISOC, it cannot support either the transitional or the sustaining grant request from the Languages of Life Inc.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

CONSULTATION

Public consultation was not required.

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*