

Video Remote Interpreting Pilot Project: Final Report

Presented by:

Hon. Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar, LAPITF Chair

Hon. Samantha Jessner, ITAC Co-Executive Sponsor

Mr. David H. Yamasaki, ITAC, LAPITF, Co-Executive Sponsor

March 2019



History

- January 2015 – The council adopted the *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts*
- March 2015 – Chief Justice formed the Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force (LAPITF)
- Plan contains 75 recommendations
- Six recommendations addressed video remote interpreting (VRI)

Background

- Over 200 languages are spoken in the California courts
- Courts serve 58 counties across ~164,000 square miles
- Limited supply of qualified court interpreters
- VRI Pilot Project Goal – Verify whether VRI can reliably assist limited English proficient (LEP) court users
- Assess how technology can address language access needs
- Develop knowledge that could be useful to the branch in evaluating related technology initiatives

Language Access Plan - Recommendations

- LAP contains guidelines for VRI (App. B-D), but we needed recommended technical guidelines
- **LAP Rec. No. 14**
Establish recommended minimum technical guidelines for VRI
- **LAP Rec. No. 16:**
Conduct a pilot project for VRI

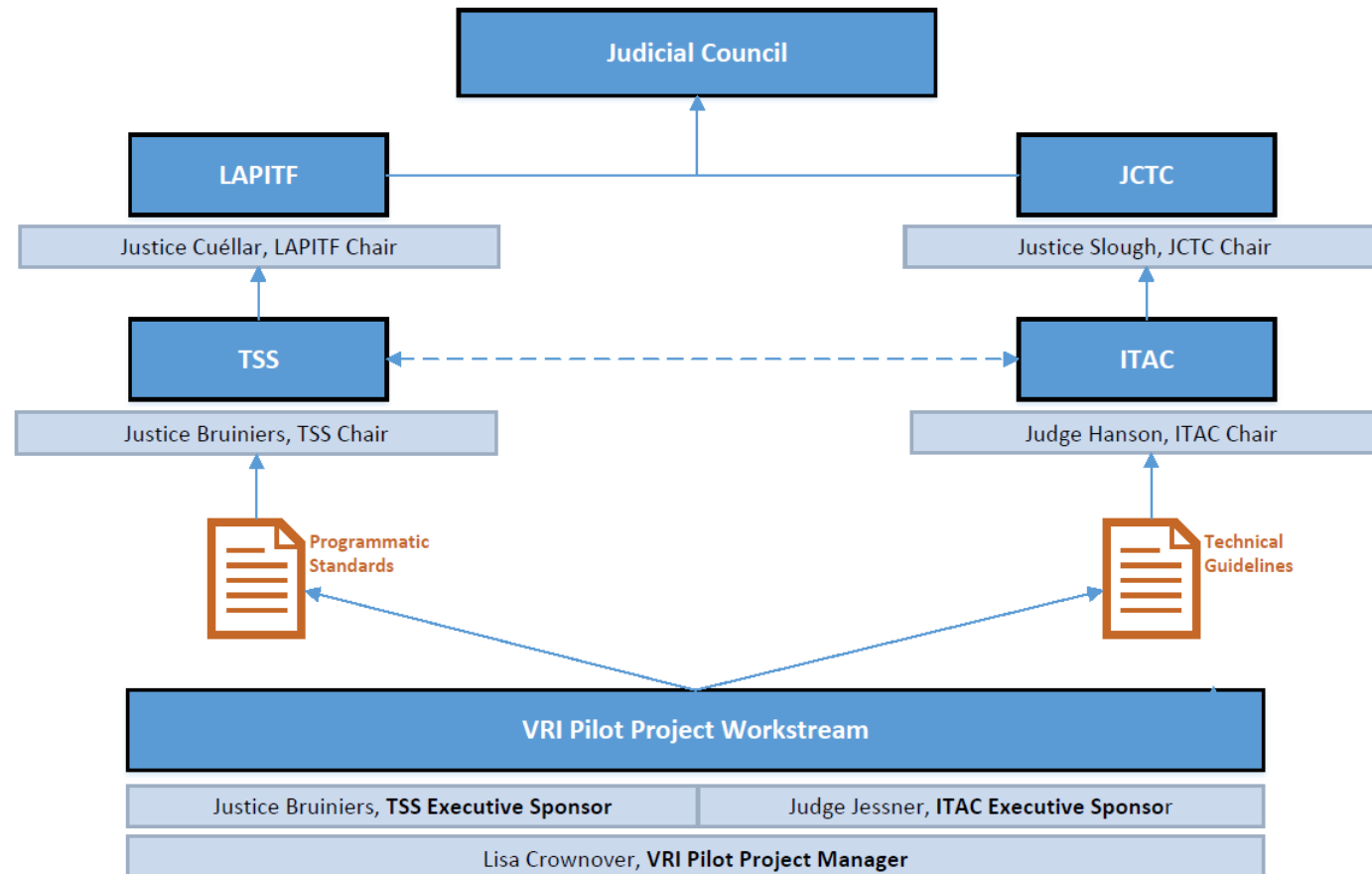


Per LAP Rec. No. 16, to the extent possible, the pilot should collect relevant data on:

- *due process issues*
- *participant satisfaction*
- *whether remote interpreting increases the use of certified and registered interpreters (as opposed to provisionally qualified interpreters)*
- *the effectiveness of a variety of available technologies*
- *cost-benefit analysis*

Governance Structure

Video Remote Interpreting Pilot Project Governance Structure



VRI Workstream Team

Includes:

- Judges
- Court Executive Officers
- Court Interpreters
- Court Staff, including IT staff
- Judicial Council staff

Mission:

- Consult on development of VRI **training** for all stakeholders
- Review San Diego State University (SDSU) pilot **evaluation**
- Develop proposed minimum VRI **technical guidelines**
- Provide input on **programmatic and usage guidelines**
- Recommend **new rules of court** to support use of VRI

Video Remote Interpreting Pilot Project

In 2018, the VRI Pilot took place in three counties:

- Ventura
- Merced
- Sacramento

Two vendors per county:



A Video Remote Interpreter's workstation, located in the Interpreter's Office at the downtown Sacramento Superior Court, connected to the Carol Miller Justice Center, Sacramento, CA.

Training

Training consisted of:

- Mock hearings
- Use of VRI equipment
- Hardware and software tutorials
- Training documentation
- Collection of data / feedback



Mock hearing at the Carol Miller Justice Center in Sacramento, CA, to test the use of VRI equipment with a remote interpreter.

Pilot GO-LIVE Dates and Case Types

GO-LIVE dates for:

- Ventura - January 2018
- Merced - January 2018
- Sacramento - February 2018

Case types:

- Felony arraignments
- Traffic arraignments
- Some civil matters



In-custody defendant at the Sacramento Jail Courthouse, communicating to the court interpreter, located at the Sacramento Main Courthouse, during his arraignment. The defendant can see the court interpreter on the screen directly in front of him and there is also a large screen with the court interpreter located to the right of him.

Sacramento County



Interpreter Joey Tobin at the Sacramento Interpreter workstation, Sacramento Courts.



Detained defendant at the Sacramento Jail Court house, with Deputy Roberts at Sacramento Courts.



Arraignment setting using video remote interpreting equipment with a remote interpreter in Sacramento County. The defendant communicates with the interpreter by phone, and can see the interpreter on the courtroom monitor and on a video phone located directly in front of the defendant. The video phone makes face-to-face phone calls possible, and also allows attorney-client communication between the defendant, his/her attorney, and the interpreter.

Merced County



Following a live hearing, Judge Bacciarini interacts with interpreter Rosa Lopez via video remote interpreting equipment in a Merced Courtroom.



Judge McCabe presiding over a mock hearing to test and train court staff on VRI equipment in a Los Banos Courtroom.



Superior Court CEO Linda Romero-Soles, Merced County, participating in a mock hearing using VRI equipment as a training exercise.

Ventura County



Mock hearing using video remote interpreting equipment with a remote interpreter in Ventura County.



Interpreter Ramon Valdivieso at the Video Remote Interpreter workstation in Ventura County.

VRI Equipment



Interpreters, Mark Crossley and Diana Callahan, testing and training for American Sign Language (ASL) usage on the VRI equipment.



Above: Defendant's table at the courthouse in Ventura County, with a tester calling into the courtroom from a remote VRI workstation.



Bottom Right: Headset equipment reserved for listen-only mode. As appropriate, these headsets are available to friends or family members and allow them to listen in to the court interpreter, helping them to understand court proceedings.

Independent Evaluation

San Diego State University (SDSU) Research Foundation was contracted as an independent evaluator and collected VRI pilot data, as outlined in the Language Access Plan, to inform us of:

- Due process issues
- Participant satisfaction
- Use of certified and registered interpreters
- Effectiveness of technologies



Sample Survey

STAFF ONLY

SURVEY ID: _____
DATE DATA ENTERED: _____ INITIALS: _____

VRI Pilot Event Survey: LEP Court User Version [ENGLISH]

SITE: Sacramento - Main Jail Courthouse, Dept. 63
ROLE: LEP Court User

Month: _____

This survey is part of a research project about interpreting. Participation is voluntary and your responses are completely anonymous and are not tied to any personal information. You have the option not to respond to any question that you choose. Participation or non-participation will not impact your relationship with the court. Submission of the survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

Will you answer just a few questions about the interpreting services you received today?

☐ Yes
☐ No

L1. Could you hear all court participants clearly?

☐ Yes
☐ No

L2. Could you see all court participants clearly?

☐ Yes
☐ No

L3. How satisfied were you with the interpreting services you received at court today?

☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

L4. Were the interpreting services you received today provided by:

☐ An interpreter who was in the courtroom with you → THANK YOU, END OF SURVEY
☐ An interpreter who was connected to the courtroom using video and audio technology?

L5. Was the equipment provided easy to use?

☐ Yes
☐ No

STAFF ONLY
Survey language: ☐ English ☐ Spanish ☐ Other: _____

VRI Pilot Event Survey | LEP Court User Version: English | Updated: 1/22/2018

STAFF ONLY

SURVEY ID: _____
DATE DATA ENTERED: _____ INITIALS: _____

VRI Pilot Event Survey: LEP Court User Version [ENGLISH]

SITE: **Sacramento - Main Jail Courthouse, Dept. 63**
ROLE: **LEP Court User**

Month: _____

This survey is part of a research project about interpreting. Participation is voluntary and your responses are completely anonymous and are not tied to any personal information. You have the option not to respond to any question that you choose. Participation or non-participation will not impact your relationship with the court. Submission of the survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

Will you answer just a few questions about the interpreting services you received today?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

L1. Could you hear all court participants clearly?

Pilot Evaluation Findings

- Due process concerns for LEP persons assessed based on **communication effectiveness**
- 95% of judicial officers surveyed indicated VRI allowed for effective communication
- 59% of post-pilot survey respondents, including court interpreters, indicated VRI enabled meaningful participation (an additional 22% of survey respondents were neutral)

Pilot Evaluation Findings Cont'd

- The VRI equipment received high marks from LEP court users for satisfaction and ease of use
- Vendors – Connected Justice and Paras & Associates – scored well on technical aspects and were approved to go forward
- Pilot primarily used court employee interpreters and was not able to compare or establish any cost savings from the use of VRI

Post-Pilot Activity

- **Fall 2018** – Recommended minimum technical guidelines for VRI were developed, and the LAP's VRI programmatic guidelines were also updated
- **December 2018** – Draft Judicial Council report, SDSU findings, and draft VRI guidelines were shared with VRI Workstream for feedback and input
- **January/February 2019** – LAPITF, ITAC and JCTC all approved draft council report and VRI guidelines to go forward to council

Recommendations for Council

- Adopt the revised VRI guidelines, which now include recommended minimum technology guidelines
- Approve creation of Leveraged Procurement Agreements (LPAs) with the two approved VRI pilot vendors
- Approve development of a VRI Program for the branch in 2019
- Regularly report to council on VRI implementation progress



Questions & Answers

<http://www.courts.ca.gov/VRI.htm>