Factsheet on National Translation Committee (NTC)

As part of efforts to strengthen government communications, MCI had set up the National Translation Committee (NTC) on 1 March 2014. The NTC is a collaborative effort involving the People sector (academics and the general public), the Public sector (government agencies), and the Private sector (media & translation industry players) to address translation-related issues. Members of the NTC comprise representatives from local mainstream vernacular media, veteran translators/interpreters, academics, professionals, and representatives from government agencies.

The Committee oversees short-term and long-term plans to enhance Whole-of-Government (WoG) translation capabilities. Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information, and National Development, Ms Sim Ann is the current Chairman of the NTC. More information on the NTC members is at go.gov.sg/ntcmembers.

The NTC aims to enhance translation capabilities in Singapore through:
a) Promoting best practices among public sector agencies on procuring/producing translation;
b) Creating a collaboration platform among the public, private and people sectors, to promote and raise translation standards; and
c) Nurturing the next generation of translation talent for Singapore.

The NTC also works alongside three Resource Panels (RPs), namely the Chinese RP, Malay RP and Tamil RP. More information on the RP members is at go.gov.sg/ntcrp. The RPs will:
a) Assist and support the implementation of the NTC's initiatives, aimed at raising translation standards for the particular language; and
b) Help standardise the translations of terms in the official languages in Singapore, and to advise on the appropriateness of terms in the official languages adopted by the media and government agencies.

NTC Initiatives

The NTC has introduced several initiatives to promote best practices, strengthen collaboration among the public, private and people sectors, and nurture the next generation of translation talent. Some of these include:
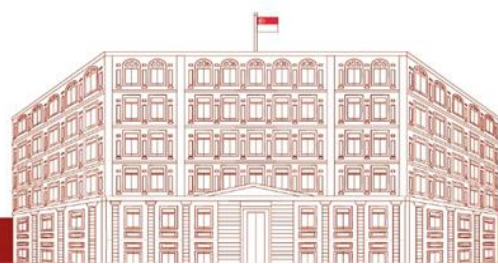
- As part of promoting best practices in the public sector on producing and procuring translation services, the **Whole-of-Government Period Contract and Framework Agreement for Translation Services** was rolled out on 7 May 2015. This framework provides a list of translation vendors who have been evaluated for quality and price competitiveness. With this framework, government agencies are able to procure quality translations at a fair rate with a quicker turnaround time. To date, 63 government agencies have utilised the framework to procure translation services.

- MCI's Translation Department worked closely with the Resource Panels (RPs) to launch the **Government Terms Translated Database**, a collection of standardised translations of policy-related terms in the four official languages, on 1 July 2015. Members of the public can access the database via https://www.translatedterms.gov.sg. MCI and NTC also worked with Street Building Names Board to include street names and MRT station names in the database. The database contains over 10,000 terms currently, and MCI works with government agencies to ensure the database is updated periodically.

- The **Community-in-Translation (CiT) initiative** was launched in 2016 to bring together like-minded partners from various sectors to organise events and activities that aim to raise awareness and interest in translation, as well as to equip participants with useful translation skills. Under the CiT, the **Community-in-Translation Events Grant (CiTEG)** provides funding support for individuals and organisations to organise community-driven events with a strong translation element, such as competitions, exhibitions, seminars, talks and workshops. More than 13,000 teachers, students and members of public have benefitted from the events and activities organised and/or supported under the CiT initiative.

- To nurture the next generation of translation talents for Singapore, MCI introduced the **Information Service (Translation) Scholarship** in 2015. It aims to identify and groom young Singaporeans who have a strong interest in translation, a deep familiarity with the local context and an interest to work in the Public Service. The scholarship is awarded to students who are about to enter universities and mid-course undergraduates. Eleven students have received this scholarship since its inception. Separately, in-service officers also have opportunities to do postgraduate or short-term courses to deepen their knowledge and skills related to translation.
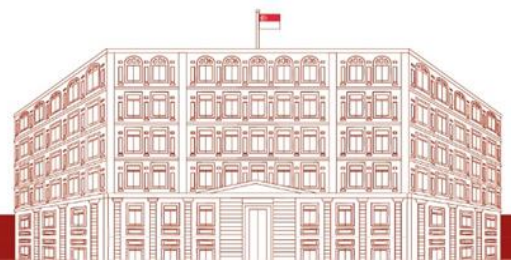
- The **Translation Talent Development Scheme (TTDS)** was set up in 2018 as a co-sponsorship grant to encourage Singaporean translation and interpretation practitioners from the private sector to further develop their capabilities and attain mastery of their skills. TTDS has sponsored up to 90% of fees associated with capability development programmes such as local and overseas courses, workshops, seminars, webinars and conferences subject to a cap of $10,000 per participant. To date, 20 T&I practitioners have benefited from the grant and they serve as NTC ambassadors to share and pass on experiences with the next generation of translators.

- The Government customised Machine Translation (MT) engine, **SG Translate**, was jointly developed by MCI and A*STAR's Institute for Infocomm Research (I^2R), and the project is supported by TRANS Grant. This project aims to leverage technology to produce decent first-cut translations quickly, while ensuring consistency in the rendering of government terms and messages, to meet the increasing demand for effective Whole-of-Government (WoG) communications. The MT engine was launched to the WoG in July 2019. With the addition of the Tamil engine to SG Translate in October 2020, the MT engine is now complete and is able to provide translations in our four official languages.

- The success of SG Translate within the Public Sector prompted the idea of **SG Translate Together** web portal, aimed at rallying Singaporeans to improve the performance of the MT engine together with the Government. MCI will invite selected groups, including translation practitioners and members of the media, to use the SG Translate Together web portal for first-cut translations in 2021. Users will get to refine the machine-translated text and submit them to the web portal. The edited text will then be reviewed before the final text is consolidated for the further training of SG Translate. This method of gathering translation data will allow MCI to tap on the expertise of Singaporeans to improve the accuracy of SG Translate.

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