



LATINO INITIATIVE

“Strengthening the Work Among Latino and Non-English Populations in the Area”

Doctrinal Foundation

“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”
Moses 1:39

To receive eternal life, we must “come unto Christ” (Moroni 10:32). The Savior’s Atonement allows us to be cleansed from sin and have our hearts changed. Our Heavenly Father desires all of His children to return to Him. As we come unto Christ and help others do the same, we participate in God’s work of salvation and exaltation, guided by the two great commandments to love God and our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39; *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 1.1).

Vision for Growth and Inclusion

Latinos represent a significant portion of the population in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. Yet in the North America Southwest Area, members in Spanish-speaking units comprise only 7.4% of the membership. This disparity presents an opportunity to better engage Latino and non-English-speaking individuals and families.

This initiative seeks to:

- Foster integration and growth
- Ensure members feel welcome, supported, and able to progress along the covenant path
- Implement coordinated efforts through the area, coordinating council, and stake committees

KEY OBJECTIVES

Strengthen Existing Language Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support over 200 existing language units with training, leadership development, and resource access• Encourage attendance in geographical units while maintaining strong language unit support
Expand Simultaneous Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide real-time interpretation for meetings and activities• Pilot and standardize digital tools such as Zoom• Train leaders and volunteers to offer consistent, high-quality translation
Organize Parallel Sacrament Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold language-specific sacrament meetings in the same building and time as English meetings, in separate rooms• Allow members to worship in their preferred language while staying connected to their geographical units• Create a more welcoming environment for returning or less-active members
Support Youth and Mission Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate youth into geographical units to develop spiritually and socially• Prepare youth to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, temple ordinances, and missionary service• Provide financial support to ensure no youth is excluded from serving a mission

AREA COMMITTEE

Leadership and Oversight

The Latino Initiative Committee is composed of experienced leaders and specialists who provide guidance, resources, and oversight to ensure effective implementation.

Four Area Seventies focused on:

- **EnglishConnect:** Expanding language-learning opportunities to strengthen participation and integration
- **Boundaries and Realignments:** Assessing and adjusting unit boundaries to improve accessibility and growth
- **Leadership Instruction:** Providing training and mentorship to leaders
- **Caring for the Youth:** Ensuring young members receive support to serve missions
- **Area Communications Director:** Ensuring effective messaging and outreach to members, leaders, and communities
- **Director for Temporal Affairs (DTA):** Overseeing logistical and operational resources to facilitate implementation.
- **Area Welfare and Self-Reliance Manager (AWSR):** Coordinating self-reliance efforts to help members progress spiritually and temporally
- **Area Planning Manager:** Ensuring proper execution and follow-through on all initiatives
- **Two Area Senior Missionary Couples:** Providing specialized support and training to coordinating council and stake committees
- **Additional specialists as needed:** Addressing emerging challenges and opportunities to enhance effectiveness.

COORDINATING COUNCIL COMMITTEE

Leadership and Oversight

Each coordinating council committee over the initiative will be structured as follows:

- **Area Seventy:** Presides over the committee, providing vision, guidance, and coordination to ensure efforts align with area priorities and Church initiatives
- **Stake Senior Service Missionary Couple** will assist with:
 - Training and mentoring local leaders and committee members
 - Providing ongoing support to ensure sustained progress
 - Helping implement initiatives to strengthen inclusion efforts across stakes
- **Youth and Single Adult Representatives** will share strategies to maximize participation in:
 - Church events that build faith and connection
 - Activities that foster friendships and strengthen testimonies
 - Classes such as EnglishConnect, Self-Reliance, and Emotional Resilience, helping participants develop spiritually, emotionally, and temporally
 - Learning how to use the Activity Sharing Tool to effectively invite and engage more individuals
- **Interpretation Specialists** will be called to:
 - Ensure stake leaders and specialists receive training on best practices
 - Provide consistent and high-quality interpretation for stake meetings, conferences, and activities

STAKE COMMITTEE

Foster Unity and Participation

Stake Committee Responsibilities

- **Geographical and Language Units:** Strengthen the existing language-specific units while encouraging new friends and reactivated members to attend their geographical unit to foster greater local integration
- **Provide Simultaneous Interpretation:** Ensure real-time interpretation is provided in sacrament meeting to enhance accessibility for non-English-speaking members and friends
- **Organize Parallel Sacrament Meetings:** Where needed, hold language-specific meetings within the same building at the same time to improve participation and inclusion
- **Organize EnglishConnect Classes:** Offer EnglishConnect classes at the stake and/or ward level to help members and friends improve their language skills, making it easier to integrate into English-speaking units
- **Care for the Youth: Ensure Latino** and other community youth can:
 - Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood
 - Prepare for and receive their temple endowment
 - Serve full-time missions including support for those facing financial challenges to ensure that no youth is excluded from these opportunities

MEASURING SUCCESS

The Latino Initiative is a structured effort to ensure that Latino and other non-English-speaking members are fully integrated into the Church. By removing barriers, strengthening leadership, and expanding opportunities for participation, this initiative will help members progress along the covenant path and feel a true sense of belonging.

Through area, stake, and coordinating council committees as well as leadership support, language accessibility, and self-reliance efforts, the initiative will empower individuals and families to grow in faith, contribute to their communities, and prepare for greater spiritual opportunities, including making temple covenants and participating in missionary service.

The success of this initiative will be measured through:

1. Sacrament Meeting Attendance
2. Number of Latino Missionaries Serving
3. EnglishConnect Enrollment
4. Number of Converts
5. Latino Leadership Representation
6. Temple Service and Family History Work

Q & A

General Overview

Q: What is the Latino Initiative?

A: The Latino Initiative is a structured effort to strengthen inclusion, leadership, and participation among Latino and non-English-speaking members in the North America Southwest Area. It focuses on removing barriers, improving accessibility, and expanding opportunities for spiritual growth through stake, coordinating council, and area committees.

Q: Why is this initiative important?

A: Latinos represent a significant portion of the population in Nevada, Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. However, only 7.4 percent of total Church membership in the area is Latino, revealing a substantial gap. This initiative helps increase engagement, inclusion, and support, ensuring that all members feel welcomed and have access to the blessings of the gospel.

Key Objectives

Q: What are the main objectives of the initiative?

A: The initiative focuses on:

1. Strengthening existing language units through leadership training and increased accessibility
2. Expanding simultaneous interpretation for sacrament meetings, conferences, and activities
3. Organizing parallel sacrament meetings to make worship more accessible
4. Supporting youth and ensuring mission opportunities for all, regardless of financial circumstances
5. Strengthening leadership development and coordination at all levels

Q & A

Q: Will this initiative eliminate language units?

A: No. The goal is to strengthen existing language units while encouraging reactivated members and new friends to attend their geographical units.

Any decisions regarding language units must be discussed at the stake and coordinating council levels before implementation.

Q: Who is responsible for implementing this initiative?

A: The initiative will be led through area, coordinating council, and stake committees, each with specific roles in ensuring consistent and achievable progress.

Q: What is the role of the stake committee?

A: The Stake Committee will be led by a member of the stake presidency with representatives from the Relief Society, Primary, Young Women, High Council, and senior missionary couples. The committee will:

- Provide simultaneous translation for all sacrament meetings
- Organize parallel sacrament meetings as needed
- Expand EnglishConnect courses to help members integrate
- Ensure that Latino youth receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, temple ordinances, and mission preparation support

Key Focus Areas

Q: Why is simultaneous translation a priority?

A: Many members and friends have difficulties engaging fully due to language barriers. Providing interpretation allows everyone to worship, learn, and serve equally. Stake leaders should call specialists to manage systems such as Zoom and other translation tools.

Q & A

Q: How will parallel sacrament meetings help?

A: Many less-active members and friends do not attend church because language units are far from their homes. Holding simultaneous sacrament meetings in the same building, at the same time, but in separate rooms will:

- Allow members to worship in their preferred language while staying connected to their geographical unit
- Provide a welcoming environment for returning members
- Help more individuals partake of the sacrament and strengthen their faith

Q: Who presides and conducts parallel sacrament meetings while the main sacrament meeting is taking place?

A: Local priesthood leaders, under the direction of the stake presidency, will preside and conduct these meetings. These decisions will be prayerfully determined within stake and ward councils, recognizing that revelation often comes as we work together in unity and counsel.

Q: Could the planning of concurrent sacrament meetings add a significant burden to bishoprics already managing extensive responsibilities?

A: No. Planning concurrent sacrament meetings should not create a significant burden. Instead, it presents opportunities for bishoprics to develop leadership and administrative skills. Effective use of councils will distribute responsibilities, ensuring manageable loads.

Q: How would such meetings be held when 2–4 units already occupy a meetinghouse?

A: If meetinghouse capacity is fully utilized, we will seek alternative worship locations, such as rented spaces, if necessary. However, we anticipate this will not be a significant barrier, as councils prayerfully plan and coordinate to resolve logistical challenges.

Q: Would leaders be expected to speak Spanish or another language to preside?

A: Yes. Church leaders emphasize the importance of linguistic integration, encouraging American leaders to learn Spanish and Latino leaders to learn English. To facilitate this, stakes will provide resource courses to help leaders effectively communicate and minister.

Q & A

Q: Would members be assigned to attend a specific meeting, or would they choose which meeting to attend?

A: Members and friends will be assigned to specific meetings to foster clear organization, integration, and unity within each congregation. Assignments will be carefully determined through council discussions and revelation.

Q: Might some members feel isolated by not participating in the main ward sacrament meeting?

A: The fundamental purpose of this initiative is to reduce feelings of isolation and increase meaningful participation. Many individuals currently feel disconnected because of language or cultural barriers. Stake committees, through prayerful councils and inspired leadership, will proactively address local concerns, providing inclusive solutions that foster a strong sense of belonging and unity.

Q: How does this initiative support youth?

A: Latino and non-English-speaking youth often face challenges in fully participating in leadership and Church activities. This initiative will:

- Ensure youth are integrated into geographical units to build leadership and social connections
- Provide financial support so that no youth is denied the opportunity to serve a full-time mission
- Encourage temple preparation and participation in priesthood and leadership development

Q: How does the initiative incorporate EnglishConnect?

A: EnglishConnect courses will be expanded at stake, ward, and branch levels to help members and friends:

- Improve language skills for better integration
- Access education and self-reliance opportunities
- Have flexible class schedules, including before or after Sunday meetings

Q & A

Measuring Success

Q: How will we measure the success of this initiative?

A: Key indicators will be reviewed, including:

1. Sacrament Meeting Attendance: Participation among Latino and non-English-speaking members
2. Number of Missionaries Serving: Latino youth serving full-time missions
3. EnglishConnect Enrollment: Growth in class participation and completion rates
4. Convert Baptism among Latino and non-English-speaking friends
5. Leadership Representation: Latino members serving in stake, ward, and area leadership roles
6. Temple Service and Family History Work: Increased temple recommend holders, ordinance participation, and family history submissions