



CHAIRING BILINGUAL MEETINGS

Tips

To chair bilingual meetings or events successfully, you must take bilingualism into account from the moment you start your preparations. The presence of unilingual individuals should not prevent participants from using their preferred official languages. In order to comply with the [Official Languages Act](#), these tips should be implemented in any meeting (where the participants are from both linguistic groups).

Before the meeting or event

- Send a bilingual meeting or event announcement.
- Specify in the invitation whether the meeting or event will be conducted in both official languages, whether simultaneous interpretation will be available or whether separate meetings or event will be held in each official language.
- When the meeting is bilingual, provide a bilingual agenda and all reference material in both official languages simultaneously.
- Appoint a bilingual chair if you do not feel comfortable enough in your second language to chair the bilingual meeting or event. (consider one francophone and one Anglophone co-chair)

At the beginning of the meeting or event

- Greet participants and make the opening remarks in both official languages.
- Remind participants that the meeting or event will be conducted in both official languages, and encourage them to use their preferred official language.
- Invite participants to ask for clarification when needed.

Throughout the meeting or event

- Alternate between English and French for each item (one paragraph or item in each official language).
- Remind participants that they can ask questions and receive answers in their preferred official language.
- Encourage all participants to practice their second official language
- Answer questions in the official language in which they are asked, and summarize questions so that all participants can follow.

When closing the meeting or event

- Make the closing remarks in both official languages.

After the meeting or event

- Ensure that the minutes of the meetings are distributed in both official languages simultaneously.
- Ensure that the follow-up is done in both official languages.

*Meetings and events should be conducted in a bilingual format with management, staff, clients and members of the public.



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Checklist

- 1. Bilingual chair identified. If applicable, colleague asked to co-chair to ensure the balanced use of both official languages.
- 2. Bilingual invitation sent.
- 3. Agenda and reference documents translated.
- 4. Agenda and reference documents sent to participants in both official languages simultaneously.
- 5. Participants are greeted in both official languages and encouraged to use the language of their choice. This is a great opportunity to encourage employees to practice their second official language. Active offer to translate upon request.
- 6. Alternate between both official languages.
- 7. Questions answered in the official languages in which they were asked.
- 8. Summaries provided, as needed, in the other language.
- 9. Participants encouraged to ask for clarification when needed.
- 10. Bilingual nature of the meeting maintained even in the presence of unilingual participants.
- 11. Feedback requested from participants on the use of both official languages during the meeting.
- 12. Minutes and additional documents distributed in both official languages simultaneously.