

Use of **Official Languages** in the **Virtual Work Era**



For a better understanding of our rights and obligations

Overview

Official Languages and Virtual Work

In the era of virtual work, it is essential to fully understand our official languages (OL) rights and obligations.

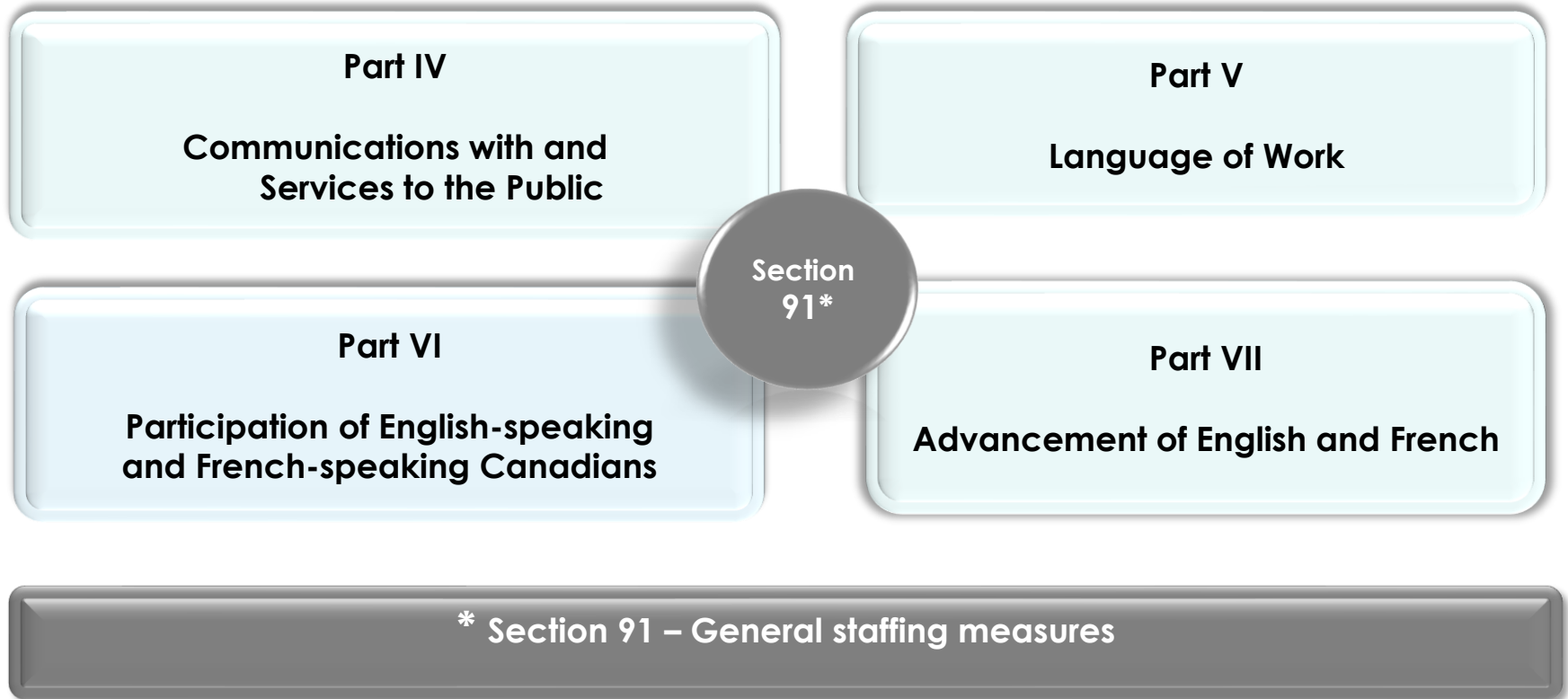
- ✓ Our language rights and obligations continue to apply, **according to the location of the position*** no matter if we work **on-site, at home** (telework) or **remotely from another CRA institution**.

* Position location refers to the office and region where the position is located in the organizational structure.

This presentation is a complement to the → [Official Languages](#) page, which contains many resources and tools for managers.

The *Official Languages Act* (OLA)

Beyond the virtual reality, the CRA's obligations stem from these four parts and from section 91 of the OLA.



The Official Languages Act (continued)

Part IV Communications with and Services to the Public

- ✓ Canadians have the right to communicate with federal institutions and receive available services in the official language of their choice.

Part V Language of Work

- ✓ For purposes of language of work, employees who hold positions in bilingual regions have the right to work in the official language of their choice, except when they are providing a service to the public or to other employees.

In the **virtual context**:

- ✓ It is important to take into account Parts IV and V and section 91 of the OLA.
- ✓ The goal of this presentation is to expand on the responsibilities arising therefrom.

The *Official Languages Act* (continued)

Part VI Participation of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians

Without regard to their ethnic origin or first language learned, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that:

- ✓ all English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians have equal opportunities for employment and advancement in federal institutions;
- ✓ the composition of the work-force reflects these two communities.

Part VII Advancement of English and French

- ✓ The Government of Canada is committed to promoting the enhancement of English-speaking and French-speaking communities in Canada and to fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

Section 91 General staffing measures

- ✓ This section of the OLA sets out the need for objectivity when determining the language requirements of positions.
- ✓ These requirements must be based on the duties to be carried out to serve members of the public in the official language of their choice or to fulfill language-of-work obligations.

Communications with and services to the public in a virtual world

The CRA's Obligations

- ✓ Inform the public that our services are provided in both OL.
- ✓ Provide services to the public without delay and of equal quality in the OL of their choice.
- ✓ Take into account the needs of OL minority communities in order to design programs and deliver services of equal quality in both OL according to the substantive equality principle.

In the **virtual context**:

- ✓ Communications with the public are done in the client's OL of choice, since all CRA offices are required to provide communications and services in both OL regardless of where we are located.

Tools – for more information:

- [Active offer: A culture of respect, a culture of excellence](#)
- [Voicemail scenarios](#)

Communications with and services to the public in a virtual world (continued)

Client's Services

- ✓ Use the OL of the client's choice or reply in both OL when the language of choice is unknown.
 - ✓ If you occupy a bilingual position: Register a telephone message* in both OL.
- * This message has to be the same in both OL and begin in English followed by French except in Quebec (French followed by English).

By Mail or Online

- ✓ All CRA digital services, including publications, are in both OL.
- ✓ Notices and letters must be sent in the client's OL of choice.
- ✓ Employees must create bilingual [signature blocks](#).

Language of work and virtual reality

Rights and Obligations

Our rights and obligations apply:

- ✓ Depending on whether our position is located in a bilingual or unilingual region for language-of-work purposes;
- ✓ Regardless of whether we work **on-site** or **remotely from home**, or from **another CRA institution**.

The public's rights first

- ✓ We must **always respect clients' language preference** when we provide **services to the public or to other employees**, such as internal services or supervisory functions.

Language of work and virtual reality (continued)

Offices located in a **Bilingual Region**

Regions	Offices
National Capital Region	All offices
New Brunswick	All offices
Montréal Region	Laval and Brossard Tax Services Offices, Montréal (including all offices on the Island of Montréal)
Some parts of the Eastern Townships, the Gaspé Peninsula, and Western Quebec	Outaouais and Sherbrooke
Some parts of eastern and northern Ontario	North Bay, Sault Ste-Marie, and Sudbury

Your office is not listed in the table above? This means that it is in a **unilingual region** for language-of-work purposes.

Rights and obligations (language of work)

If your position is located in a **Bilingual Region**

Rights/obligations	Employees occupying a bilingual positions	Employees occupying a unilingual positions
<p>Supervision Performance appraisals</p>	<p>In the employee's OL of choice regardless of where the supervisor's position is located.</p>	<p>In the employee's OL of choice if the manager holds a bilingual position in a bilingual region. Otherwise, in the language of the employee's position.</p>
<p>Internal services Meetings/Teleconferences Staffing process / Grievances Job-related training Development training Work instruments and electronic systems (accessing regularly and widely-used).</p>	<p>In the employee's OL of choice.</p>	

Rights and obligations (language of work)

If your position is located in a **Unilingual Region**

Rights/obligations	Employees occupying a bilingual position	Employees occupying a unilingual position
Staffing process Grievances	In the employee's OL of choice.	
Internal services Supervision Performance appraisals Meetings/Teleconferences	In the language of the majority of the population of the province or territory where the office is located (French in Quebec and English everywhere else).	
Work instruments and electronic systems (accessing regularly and widely-used)	In the employee's OL of choice.	In French in Quebec; in English everywhere else.
Job-related training	In the employee's OL of choice.	In the language of the employee's position.
Developmental training	In the employee's OL of choice within reasonable limits.	

Virtual supervision and management

Supervision – Scenarios

Scenarios The employee holds a...	Official language of supervision The employee has the right to be supervised...
Bilingual position in a bilingual region	In English or French (OL of their choice). This obligation applies regardless of where the supervisor's position is located (in a bilingual or unilingual region).
Unilingual position in a bilingual region	In English or French (OL of their choice) only if the following two conditions are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The supervisor holds a bilingual position AND ✓ The supervisor's position is in a bilingual region. If neither of these conditions are met , employees are supervised in the language of their position.
Bilingual position in a unilingual region	In the language of the region.
Unilingual position in a unilingual region	In the language of the region.

Virtual supervision and management (continued)

Virtual Meetings and Conferences

Employees whose positions are located in offices in **bilingual regions** for language-of-work purposes are entitled to work and be supervised in the OL of their choice, which includes:

- ✓ meetings or conferences whether they are held **on-site, by telephone**, or **virtually**.

The chair of a meeting or conference must take the **necessary steps when employees of both language groups are participating**. See the examples on the following pages.

Did you know?

- ✓ The invitation, agenda, documents and minutes must be distributed in both official languages at the same time.

Virtual supervision and management (continued)

Steps to Be Taken

Here are a few examples of steps to be taken in order to conduct bilingual meetings in the **virtual context**:

- ✓ Invite participants to express themselves in the OL of their choice at the start of the meeting and use the banner* as a background.
- ✓ Lead by example and use both OL at the start of the meeting and alternately during the meeting in an equivalent proportion (50/50 or 60/40).
- ✓ Present information in both OL. For example, you can:
 - Include the English and French versions juxtaposed on the same page (for example, choose the two content layout in PowerPoint).
 - Alternate your pages between English and French and speak in the other OL than the one on screen.

* The banner can be downloaded directly from the webpage.

Virtual supervision and management (continued)

Steps to Be Taken

- ✓ Always use bilingual language when inviting participants to ask their questions: Do you have any questions? Avez-vous des questions?
- ✓ Ensure that a summary is provided in English of the major points made by people who spoke in French and vice versa, when the level of bilingualism of employees is varied and where some are unilingual.
- ✓ If you are not comfortable enough in your second OL, you can call on someone with good language skills to help you present the information or summarize the important points.
- ✓ When possible, find an ally, someone you can count on to ask questions in the language of the linguistic minority.

Tools – for more information:

- [Virtual work meetings](#)
- [How to chair a bilingual meeting](#)
- [Effective practices for chairing bilingual meetings](#)

Communications

Between employees

Between regions

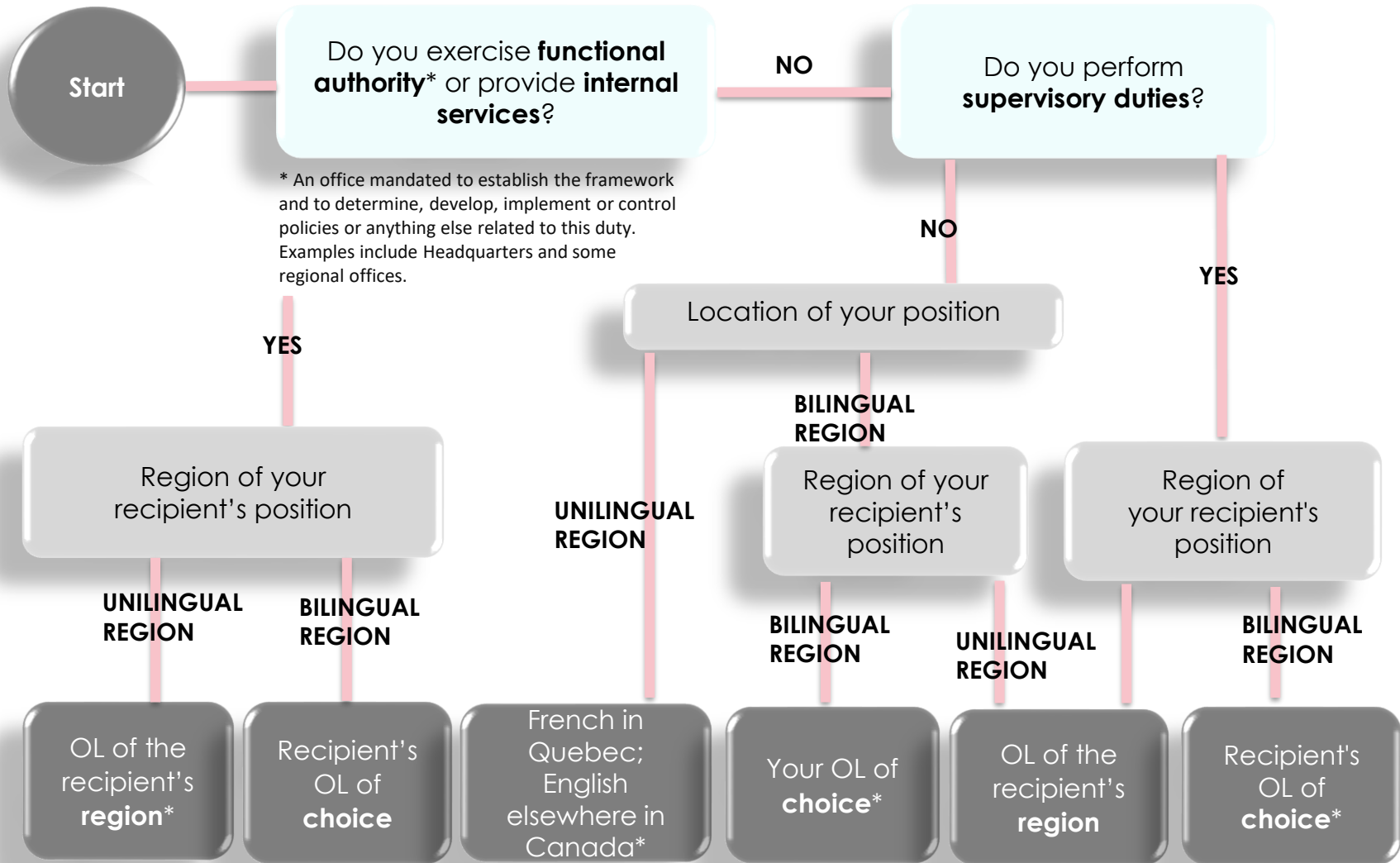
- ✓ Rules apply to communications between employees, on an individual basis, as well as to communications to a group of employees in one or more regions.
- ✓ It depends on the location of their position and their roles or responsibilities towards each other.

Note:

- ✓ Communications may be oral, written, or electronic.
- ✓ A communication issued to several employees who all have the same language preference may be issued in their preferred official language.

The diagram and table on the following pages list these communication rules.

Communications between employees



* An office mandated to establish the framework and to determine, develop, implement or control policies or anything else related to this duty. Examples include Headquarters and some regional offices.

* Or the recipient's OL of choice if these internal services are provided in both OL across the CRA.

* Understanding is up to the recipient.

* If the employee or his/her supervisor holds a bilingual position; otherwise, the language of the position.

Communications between regions

Author	Recipient	Official language of communication
All offices.	All Agency employees.	Simultaneously in both OL.
Who exercises functional authority* or performs supervisory duties , or provides internal services . * An office mandated to establish the framework and to determine, develop, implement or control policies or anything else related to this duty. Examples include Headquarters and some regional offices.	Employees whose positions are in bilingual and unilingual regions.	Simultaneously in both OL.
	Employees whose positions are in bilingual regions only.	Simultaneously in both OL.
	Employees whose positions are in unilingual regions only.	In Quebec: in French Elsewhere in Canada: in English.

Section 91 – General staffing measures

Managers' Responsibilities

The language requirements (including profiles) for positions must be established:

- ✓ **Objectively.**
- ✓ Without regard to individuals' language competencies.

And take into account the following:

- ✓ The functions and duties of the position.
- ✓ The obligations related to communications with and services to the public and language of work.
- ✓ The bilingual capacity required to provide services without delay and of equal quality in both official languages.

In the **virtual context:**

- ✓ Regardless of their location, management positions must be bilingual when managers supervise remotely (or not) employees who hold bilingual positions in bilingual regions for language-of-work purposes.

Section 91 – General staffing measures (continued)

Managers' Responsibilities

Managers are also responsible for reviewing and revising, if necessary, the identification of each position during all human resources activities, such as:

- ✓ staffing
- ✓ reorganization
- ✓ reclassification

Tools – for more information:

- [Bilingual capacity review for services and supervision](#) Guide
- [Determining the Linguistic Profile of Bilingual Positions](#) (Treasury Board) tool and [Tool for the linguistic identification of positions](#) (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages)
- [Change in language requirements of a position](#) page

Questions?

If you are an **Employee**

- ✓ For additional information, employees are invited to contact their manager.

If you are a **Manager**

- ✓ For advice and guidance, managers are invited to [submit an HR service request – General question – official languages.](#)