

Reference guide for identifying the language requirements of a position

Official languages commitment

The official languages commitment statement of the department's senior management team is first and foremost a matter of respect for our colleagues' and our employees' choice of language.

As a manager, I am committed to:

- aiming for excellence by promoting the 2 official languages on a daily basis in my work team
- acting with professionalism by paying careful attention to the language quality of the services and work of my team
- demonstrating transparency by making objective decisions regarding the language of service and the language designation of positions

Together, let us demonstrate leadership in the area of official languages and incorporate these values into our work.

Moreover, under section 91 of the *Official Languages Act*, managers must be objective in establishing a position's language requirements. In other words, **no federal employer** can arbitrarily establish language requirements in regard to service to the public and language of work. These requirements must be truly necessary to perform the duties.

Roles and responsibilities

- Managers are responsible for establishing the language requirements of positions under their responsibility and for justifying their position in the event of complaints about their sector
- The Official Languages Program is responsible for providing advice and guidance to managers on establishing the language requirements of positions
- The Organization Design and Operational Classification Directorate is responsible for verifying the language requirements of positions and for seeking guidance and advice from the Official Languages Program
- Human Resources Integrated Services will consult the Official Languages Program on issues related to the language requirements of positions

Assess your work unit's language needs

As a manager, you are responsible for organizing your resources and developing and maintaining a linguistic capacity within your work unit to fulfill the organization's linguistic obligations to your clients and staff at all times.

The following considerations are necessary and will facilitate the position review process. You will have at your disposal all the relevant information to assess your official languages needs objectively.

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Mandate of the organization

All branches as well as each sector and directorate within them, have a unique mandate that corresponds to the nature of the service they provide. It is important to know the scope of that mandate as it influences the delivery of services.

Key activities

Using the work description, list the main duties that must be performed, specifically communications and service delivery both within and outside the department.

Client group

You must first properly identify your client group.

- [external clients](#) (public)
- [internal clients](#) (employees working at the Department or within other federal organizations)

External clients

The **public** comprises any person, group of persons (professional or other associations), or organization or company (other than a Crown corporation) in Canada or abroad, and any representative of another level of government communicating with or receiving a service from a federal institution, excluding officers and employees of institutions subject to the [Official Languages Act](#) when carrying out their duties. It should be noted that the term “public” also includes contractors, suppliers and consulting firms. Pensioners become members of the public once they retire.

If the client is a member of the public, you must keep in mind that this person has the right to receive any communications or services from the Government of Canada in the official language of their choice, anywhere in Canada. In addition to the National Capital Region, the department

has designated a certain number of offices across Canada that are mandated to communicate in both official languages. The list of bilingual offices is available at Burolis.

Internal clients

Services offered to internal clients are the following:

Personal services are to be provided to employees in the official language of their choice, regardless of the language requirements of their position, in regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes. These are services that concern the individual employee's health or well-being, or personal or professional development. A few examples are:

- pay and benefits
- health care
- career counselling

Central services are essential for employees to carry out their duties and are to be provided to them in the language of their choice, regardless of the language requirements of their position, in regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes. A few examples are:

- accounting services
- administrative services
- budget and financial services
- informatics services
- evaluation and audit services
- legal services
- information and communications services
- materiel management services
- purchasing and supply services
- asset management services
- security services
- staffing and classification services
- information technology services
- translation services

If they are **internal clients** within the federal public service, you must identify whether the workplace of the person receiving the service is located in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes or in a unilingual region.

Regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes (or bilingual regions) are regions where both official languages are the languages of work, whereas in Canada's other regions only 1 language predominates. The prescribed bilingual regions include:

- National Capital Region
- parts of Northern and Eastern Ontario
- bilingual region of Montreal
- bilingual regions of “other parts of Quebec”
- Province of New Brunswick

Official languages rights and obligations

Federal employees in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes must have access to personal and central services, work instruments, regularly and widely used computer systems training and professional development in the official language of their choice.

All these services must be available simultaneously and be of equal quality in both official languages.

Managers and supervisors in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes must supervise each employee who occupies a bilingual or an either/or position in the official language chosen by that employee.

Employees who have unilingual positions may be supervised in the official language of their choice if their managers hold a bilingual position in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes.

In unilingual regions, employees are supervised in the language used by the majority of the population of the province or territory and are offered personal and central services in that language. However, employees must be provided with work instruments in both official languages when they are required to communicate with or provide services to the public or employees in both official languages.

Organization chart

Organization charts that are kept up to date will enable you to:

- know your organization's workforce
- identify positions with similar duties
- define more clearly staff reporting relationships

The organization chart needs to include only the group and level of the position with its current linguistic profile. Therefore, to prevent any influence, you must avoid including any information about the current employee if the position is filled.

Now, using your organization chart, mark the following in different colours:

- positions that require communications with the public or the provision of services to the public
 - example receiving calls to being responsible for the delivery of a program or service
- positions that require the provision of personal or central services or communications with internal clients in the federal public service
 - located in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes
- supervisory positions
 - if subordinates are located in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes

Ask yourself the following questions

- What is the target client group for each type of service?
- How many positions in the unit perform similar duties?
 - depending on the target client group for each of these similar positions, it may be possible to have a combination of unilingual positions (English essential and French essential) and bilingual positions to provide the service in both official languages
 - the number of similar bilingual positions depends on the percentage of services provided in the other official language
- Is there only 1 position to offer services to clients in both official languages?
 - if so, the position must be bilingual, and the manager must also determine how bilingual services will be provided if the incumbent is absent
- Will the services be provided verbally or in writing?
- Is it possible to use technology or examine other ways of providing the service to maximize bilingual services?

You are now ready to identify the communication requirements of a position.

Note

All requests to create or change the language requirements of a position must be recommended by Official Languages Program. To make the request, you must complete the [Identifying the language requirements of a position \(PWGSC-TPSGC 516-E\)](#) form. For more information, go to the [Identifying the language requirements of a position](#) page.

Assess the communication requirements and the linguistic profile of a bilingual position

Identifying the communication requirements of a position is a very important step, since this data is recorded in MyGCHR. The department and central agencies use this data to establish departmental statistics and assess the department's performance in relation to service delivery and human resources management and to make accurate strategic plans.

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Communication requirements

For each of your work unit's positions, you must specify the official language(s) required for each of the 6 communication requirements:

- service to the public
- personal services
- central services
- supervisory function
- grievances
- other

Choose 1 of the following options:

- 0 = Not required
- 1 = both English and French
- 2 = English only
- 3 = French only
- 4 = English or French, chosen by the incumbent

Note

A position comprising a grievance step must be designated bilingual, whether or not the position is located in a region designated as bilingual or unilingual for language-of-work purposes.

Either/or positions (English or French)

A position is considered either/or when all the duties can be performed either in English or in French. The position:

- does not provide personal or central services to employees neither
- service to the public
- it does not supervise employees
- is not a grievance level

Incumbents of either/or positions can work and be supervised in the official language of their choice.

Determine the linguistic profile of a bilingual position

When a position must be designated as bilingual, the manager is required to objectively assess the general language skills in the second language taking into consideration the duties to be performed. The service provided must be of equal quality in both languages.

The second language level must be defined with the proficiency level required in each ability. The abilities are:

- R: Reading comprehension
- W: Written expression
- OP: Oral proficiency

There are 3 proficiency levels for each linguistic ability in a second language:

- A (lowest)
- B
- C (highest)

At Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), the minimum level for a linguistic profile is B. Profile A is used in exceptional cases only. There is also level P, which requires technical or specialized skills such as:

- proofreading texts
- writing
- revising and/or editing texts
- translation
- interpretation
- teaching English or French

Refer to the table available in the Treasury Board Secretariat's [*Qualification Standards in Relation to Official Languages*](#), which lists specific and detailed technical or specialized language skills for each category.

The linguistic profile is composed of 6 letters, for example, **CBC/CBC**. The first 3 letters always apply to the English and the last 3 to the French.

The linguistic profile equality principle

The proficiency level of a position must not only reflect the duties of the position, but also respect the equal status of both official languages in the performance of those duties. Accordingly, the levels required must usually be the same in both official languages.

For example:

- BBC/BBB should be BBB/BBB or CBC/CBC
- CCC/BCC should be CCC/CCC

Examples of positions and communication requirements

Here are some examples of positions and language identification for each communication requirement:

Regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes

A position of manager that supervises a combination of bilingual and unilingual positions, is 1 of the primary points of contact for other federal departments and has regular discussions with various contractors would have the following communication requirements:

- service to the public = 1 English and French
 - service must be provided in English and French since the contractors are members of the public and have the right to communicate with federal public servants in the official language of their choice.
- personal services = 0 not required
 - this person does not offer personal services
- central services = 1 English and French
 - service must be provided in English and French since this person is a point of contact for other federal institutions located in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes
- supervisory function = 1 English and French
 - both English and French are required since the supervisor must respect the linguistic rights of their staff
 - subordinates have the right to choose the language that they want to be supervised in, and the supervisor cannot impose their preference
- grievance = 0 not required
 - this person is not in an excluded position and is not a designated grievance step
- other = 0 not required

The administrative assistant in a directorate:

- service to the public = 0 not required
 - this person does not provide services to members of the public
- personal services = 0 not required
 - this person does not offer personal services
- central services = 1 English and French
 - the service must be provided in English and French since the person serves the employees in a directorate located in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes
- supervisory function = 0 not required
 - this person does not have supervisory function
- grievance = 0 not required
 - this person is not in an excluded position and is not a designated grievance step
- other = 0 not required

Unilingual regions

A position of manager located in Halifax that supervises a combination of bilingual and unilingual positions and provides staffing and classification services to the staff in New Brunswick:

- service to the public = 0 not required
 - this person does not provide services to members of the public
- personal services = 0 not required
 - this person does not offer personal services
- central services = 1 English and French
 - the service must be provided in English and French since New Brunswick is a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes
- supervisory function = 2 English only
 - Halifax is located in a unilingual English region although subordinates hold bilingual positions, the language of work and supervision is the language used by the majority of Nova Scotia's population
- grievance = 0 not required
 - this person is not in an excluded position and is not a designated grievance step
- other = 0 not required

The administrative assistant for the director of an office that provides guidance to small and medium-size enterprises in Quebec City:

- service to the public = 1 English and French
 - the service must be provided in English and French since this person is the entry point for calls from contractors located in the Quebec City region
- personal services = 0 not required
 - this person does not offer personal services
- central services = 3 French only
 - Quebec City is located in a unilingual French region although the assistant provides administrative services to all the office's colleagues, the language of work and supervision is the language used by the majority of the province of Quebec's population
- supervisory function = 0 not required
 - this person does not have supervisory function
- grievance = 0 not required
 - this person is not in an excluded position and is not a designated grievance step
- other = 0 not required

You are now ready to identify the linguistic profile of a position.

Language skills in the second official language

Find examples of tasks for language skills in the second official language to help you identify which closely resemble the tasks that will be performed for each proficiency.

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Reading comprehension

Language skills in reading comprehension in the second official language

Level A

An employee at this level can

- fully understand very basic texts
- grasp the main idea of texts about familiar topics; and
- read and understand elementary points of information such as:
 - dates
 - numbers
 - names
 - relatively more complex texts in order to perform routine job-related tasks

A person at this level can read:

- internal communications
- letters
- emails
- routine forms
 - for example, requisitions, invoices
- very simple texts

In order to:

- file them
- distribute them
- extract specific units of information
 - for example, dates, numbers, names
- process routine requests
 - for example, requisitions, orders, invoices
- fully understand very simple texts
- understand the general idea regarding familiar, work-related topics
- carry out routine, simple actions

- for example, understand photocopying instructions, order office supplies, read a meeting agenda

Level B

An employee at this level can

- grasp the main idea of most work-related texts
- identify specific details
- distinguish between main and secondary ideas

A person at this level can carry out the activities of level A and can also read work-related such as:

- reference materials
- reports
- articles
- notices

In order to:

- extract specific information required for the job
- understand the general idea of the content
- verify that the content is factually correct when the text has been prepared by others

Level C

A person at this level can

- understand most complex details
- recognize inferences and fine points of meaning
- have a good understanding of specialized or less familiar material

A person at this level of understanding can carry out the activities of levels A and B and can also read work-related texts such as:

- policy statements
- research papers
- technical reports
- books
- complex contracts and specifications
- legislation and regulations

In order to:

- ensure completeness and accuracy

- extract details for facilitating interpretation and action
- review for meaning and tone when the material has been prepared by others
- obtain an in-depth understanding of the content
- assess implications
- provide comments
- make recommendations

Written expression

Language skill in written expression in the second official language.

Level A

An employee at this level can:

- write isolated words
- simple phrases
- simple statements
- brief notes
- lists (for example items, names, activities)
- titles or subject headings
- questions on very familiar topics using terms that indicate
 - time, place, person

In order to:

- complete a form or report related to their duties
- note simple point-form messages
- prepare an index or a table of contents
- request and provide simple information
- use templates in familiar situations

Level B

An employee writing at this level can deal with explicit information on work-related topics since they have sufficient mastery of grammar and vocabulary.

A person at this level can communicate the basic information, but the text will require some corrections in grammar and vocabulary as well as revision for style.

A person at this level can carry out the activities of level A and can also write work-related texts such as:

- short, routine messages
- short texts

- short descriptions
- brief comments
- simple and factual correspondence and directives

In order to:

- adapt templates by adding a few words or slightly modifying the content
- request or provide information, explanations or instructions
- explain certain points or request that action be taken
- formulate observations
- present conclusions
- summarize a text or meeting in point or note form

Level C

An employee at this level can:

- write texts where ideas are developed and presented in a coherent manner
- use vocabulary, grammar and spelling that are generally appropriate and require few corrections
- modify or correct texts to improve meaning, tone, clarity and conciseness

A person at this level can carry out the activities of levels A and B and can also write work-related texts such as:

- correspondence
- briefing notes
- memoranda
- reports
- recommendations
- research papers
- comprehensive summaries
- detailed presentations

In order to:

- provide or request detailed facts and rationales
- provide information or comment on contentious issues

Oral proficiency

Language skill in oral comprehension and speaking in the second official language.

Level A

An employee at this level can

- ask and answer simple questions about
 - names, addresses, dates, times or numbers
- give and follow simple instructions
- give uncomplicated directions relating to routine work situations
- make requests to colleagues or other employees and respond to such requests about simple and uncomplicated matters
- provide short, repetitive answers and information
- exchange common courtesies
 - for example, thank you, you're welcome, have a nice day

Level B

A person at this level can carry out the activities of level A and can also:

- give and follow straightforward instructions and explanations about how work is to be done,
 - what information is needed and what steps or alternatives are to be followed
- give factual accounts of actions taken or events that have occurred
- handle requests for routine information from other employees or members of the public, either by telephone or in face-to-face conversations
 - for example, about such things as services, publications, or staffing actions
- take part in departmental or interdepartmental meetings regarding factual, concrete and non-routine topics, and/or informal meetings or work sessions
- deliver presentations on concrete topics, and answer factual follow-up questions
- answer the telephone, understand simple requests, redirect calls as appropriate, and/or explain to others how to complete a form

Level C

An employee at this level can:

- support opinions
- discuss hypothetical and conditional ideas

A person at this level can carry out the activities of levels A and B and can also:

- give and understand explanations and descriptions involving complicated details, hypothetical questions, and complex and abstract ideas
- give and understand detailed accounts of events, actions taken and procedures to be followed
- explain and discuss:
 - policies
 - procedures
 - regulations

- programs
- services related to an area of work
- deal with situations requiring persuasion/negotiation
 - and present complex arguments, and/or the seamless exchange of ideas in both official languages
- deliver presentations on complex topics, and answer follow-up questions and/or conduct training sessions
- give advice to employees or clients on sensitive or complex issues participate as a member of a selection board, interview board, or assessment team as an integral part of their job functions.

Using a dash to replace a skill

Occasionally, some skills are not required. When 1 or more skills are not required, a dash (-) appears in the linguistic profile instead of the skill level.

For example, B-B/B-B

In this example, the duties do not require written expression skills.

Assistant deputy minister and other equivalent positions

Because of the complex nature of their duties, assistant deputy minister (and other equivalent titles) positions are identified at the CBC/CBC proficiency level.

In regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes, executive positions require a minimum proficiency level of CBC/CBC.

In unilingual regions, executive positions require a minimum proficiency level of CBC/CBC when they supervise employees working in a region designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes. For other executive positions, the linguistic profile of the position must reflect the duties to be performed and respect the equal status of both official languages in the performance of those duties.

The BBB/BBB linguistic profile is sufficient for supervisory positions for the technical first step when the step:

- gives straightforward instructions and explanations about how work is to be done
- does **not** have to explain policies, procedures, regulations, programs and services relating to an area of work
- does **not** discuss or provide advice on complex or sensitive issues