



ORGANIZING A MAJOR SPORTING EVENT IN CANADA

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO
PROMOTING OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information
or for a copy of this document in an alternate format.

**Office of the Commissioner
of Official Languages**

www.officiallanguages.gc.ca

344 Slater Street, 3rd Floor, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T8
Telephone: 613-996-6368 Toll free: 1-877-996-6368
TTY: 1-800-880-1990 Facsimile: 613-993-5082
E-mail: message@ocol-clo.gc.ca

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FOREWORD

The Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games left an important legacy to both the Olympic movement and Canada with respect to the inclusion of official languages in the organization of large-scale events. By publishing this guide, I would like to enable organizers of future events to benefit from the experience we gained through observations and discussions that contributed to three publications on the Games by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Sporting events not only spotlight athletic talent, but also provide an opportunity to promote the region and the country hosting participants and spectators. The reality in Canada is that we have two official languages: English and French. As one of Canada's fundamental values, linguistic duality is part of our history, our culture and the image that our country projects to the world. Many Canadians expect linguistic duality to be prominent at major events held in this country, and visitors want to enjoy the experience. This is why so much energy was spent to ensure that our official languages were showcased at the Vancouver Games and why efforts need to continue for future events.

This guide is intended primarily for organizers of major national and international sporting events in Canada and for the federal institutions involved in their organization. However, organizers of cultural and artistic events will also find useful ideas, as they face many similar challenges.

The purpose of this guide is not to replace the expertise of the organizing committee or the federal institutions involved, but rather to remind them to take official languages and language obligations into account right from the initial planning stages.

I hope you have a thoroughly successful event in which both Anglophones and Francophones feel fully welcomed and represented.



Graham Fraser
Commissioner of Official Languages

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CELEBRATING THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Major national and international sporting events held in Canada provide tremendous opportunities to promote Canadian culture and celebrate the importance of our two official languages while promoting the vitality of the country's English- and French-speaking communities.

Looking at Canada's linguistic makeup, it is clear that official languages must be taken into account if an event is to be representative of the entire country.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In Canada, more than seven million people (about one quarter of the population) speak French as their first official language, and about three quarters of the population speaks English as a first official language.
- About two million people live in official language minority communities: Anglophones in Quebec and Francophones living in the other nine provinces and three territories.
- Using English and French, it's possible to communicate with more than 98% of Canadians.

LANGUAGE OBLIGATIONS

When the Government of Canada grants funding to a non-governmental organization for an event where the two official language communities are brought together, it must comply with Parts IV and VII of the *Official Languages Act* by ensuring that agreements governing its funding clearly describe the language obligations of the recipient organization. These obligations cover areas such as communications with and services to the public and the promotion of linguistic duality.

Under the terms of Part IV of the Act, members of the public have the right to obtain services from the federal government in the official language of their choice. These services must be of equal quality in both official languages, in terms of access to the service as well as content, regardless of whether the person chooses to use English or French.

To ensure that members of the public feel comfortable using the official language of their choice, there must be an active offer of services in both languages, either verbally ("Hello, bonjour," for example) or visually (through pictograms or bilingual posters).

Part VII of the Act sets out federal institutions' obligation to enhance the vitality and support the development of official language minority communities and to foster the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society. In the context of major national and international sporting events, this responsibility implies that cultural and artistic performances will fully reflect the country's linguistic duality by showcasing Canada's two official languages as well as both official language communities, English- and French-speaking.

PARTNERS' ROLES

Many partners work together in organizing national and international sporting events. To do this successfully, they must clarify official languages responsibilities and expectations as soon as possible, according to the operational realities of each partner.

Organizing committee

The organizing committee is responsible for planning, organizing, funding and staging the event, while ensuring that all of its services are provided to the public in both official languages, in compliance with an agreement signed with the Government of Canada. It is important for the committee to raise awareness of respect for official languages among its staff and partners.

Government of Canada

The Department of Canadian Heritage coordinates the Government of Canada's financial and logistical commitment for many national and international sporting events. In that role, the Department must provide the organizing committee with assistance and guidance, and ensure that the committee fully understands and complies with the language requirements associated with organizing and staging the event.

Federal institutions

Large-scale sporting events generate an increased demand for services in both official languages in a given region and in locations that serve the travelling public. To meet the heightened demand, federal institutions (especially those providing traveller, health and safety services) must define measures as early as possible to ensure the delivery of services in both languages. They should leverage the event to continue supporting the development of official language communities and promoting the use of both official languages in Canadian society.

Provinces and municipalities

Provinces and municipalities play a key role in organizing and hosting major sporting events. Even when they have no language obligations, they still need to be made aware of the importance of taking both official languages into consideration, and they

need to be encouraged to provide bilingual service. Provinces and municipalities can help create a bilingual environment during the event by ensuring that their signage and documentation are in both official languages.

The Government of Canada has a part to play in raising awareness among the other levels of government of the importance of promoting both official languages.

Official language minority communities

The organizing committee must consider the needs of the official language minority community when developing its programs and services. Organizations representing this community can in turn provide invaluable assistance in preparing for and hosting the event, especially in the area of volunteer recruitment. They can also offer guidance on and help promote the cultural and educational programs organized in conjunction with the sporting event.

Sponsors

Numerous sponsors participate in major sporting events in various ways. When the organizing committee signs an agreement with a sponsor, it should require that the sponsor respect linguistic duality in its promotional activities. Sponsors should also be made aware of the fact that promoting both official languages is an excellent business opportunity.

Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages

The role of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages is to ensure that the language rights of all Canadians are respected and to investigate alleged contraventions of the *Official Languages Act*. It also promotes linguistic duality in Canadian society and intervenes proactively with federal institutions to support them in complying with their language obligations.

ESTABLISHING AGREEMENTS

With the Government of Canada

The Government of Canada and the partners usually sign an agreement, sometimes during the bidding phase, that defines each party's roles and responsibilities. Because of the federal government's responsibilities regarding official languages, the agreement must contain language provisions that the organizing committee and other signatories are to comply with before, during and after the sporting event.

The agreement should, at minimum, provide for the following:

- All communications with the public and participants will be provided simultaneously in both official languages (for example, signage, printed documentation, Web site, media kits, advertisements and technical manuals).
- Services will be provided in both official languages at all times to the public and participants (athletes, coaches, officials, etc.), including safety and emergency services.
- Both of Canada's official language communities will be included and represented in the spoken and visual components of the ceremonies and of the cultural activities organized in conjunction with the sporting event.

- The organizing committee will ensure active participation by members of the official language minority community and make sure that the community's needs are taken into consideration.
- The organizing committee will determine translation and interpretation needs.
- A timetable for delivering progress and evaluation reports will be prepared.
- In order to meet these requirements, the organizing committee will acquire sufficient bilingual capacity among its staff and volunteers, including the management team.

In addition to the initial agreement, other instruments, such as contribution agreements, are required to establish a framework for the activities for which the Government of Canada is providing funding. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that such agreements are clear, detailed and comprehensive so as to avoid any misinterpretation of the language provisions. The principles and values underlying language requirements should be included to help interpret the provisions.

The language provisions must be accompanied by expected results, performance indicators and reporting mechanisms, so that signatories are fully aware of their obligations arising from the principle of equality of official languages. The language requirements are the minimum standards that must be met: nothing prevents those requirements from being surpassed to better meet the needs of the two official language communities.

KEY QUESTIONS

Organizing committee

- How will we inform our employees, partners and sponsors of our language obligations?
- How will we ensure that they understand and comply with them?
- Do we know whom to contact if we are unsure about how to interpret the language provisions?

Government of Canada

- How will we ensure that agreements are clear and comprehensive with respect to official languages?
- How will we check to determine whether any of the language provisions are confusing?
- Will the language provisions contained in the agreements cover all of our expectations and responsibilities?
- Will the agreements contain principles and values to help interpret the language provisions?
- Will expected results, performance indicators and reporting mechanisms be included in the agreements?

With other partners

The organizing committee and federal institutions involved in the event will be called upon to sign other types of agreements.

- Collaborative agreement with official language communities

As early as possible in the planning stage, the organizing committee should focus on building strong relationships with key organizations in the official language minority community, as well as with national organizations representing this language group. To do this, the organizing committee could, for example, sign a collaborative agreement with these organizations to foster constructive dialogue. Regular meetings are extremely useful to plan and coordinate activities effectively.

- Agreements with service providers

When the organizing committee or a federal institution enters an agreement with a service provider to offer services to the public and participants on its behalf, it must ensure that these services are provided in both official languages. The committee or institution must clarify its

expectations, propose solutions, and perform follow-ups and monitoring. Members of the public expect to receive service in the official language of their choice, regardless of who provides the service.

- Agreements with broadcasters

The guiding principle behind any broadcast agreement (television, Web, etc.) should be to provide equal access in both official languages. In the case of events broadcast across the country, the broadcasting rights holder must ensure, from the outset, that each and every citizen will be able to experience the event in the official language of their choice, regardless of where they may find themselves in the country. The Government of Canada should be proactive so that agreements enabling equal access can be easily reached with the broadcasting rights holder.

KEY QUESTIONS

Organizing committee and federal institutions

- How will we encourage both of Canada's official language communities to participate, and how will we build relationships with key organizations within the official language minority community?
- How will we define the role of key organizations and how can we ensure that the expectations and roles of each are clear and well defined?
- How will we clarify expectations and how will we perform follow-ups and monitoring to ensure that service providers acting on our behalf fulfill official languages requirements by providing services in both languages?

Broadcasting rights holder

- What measures will we take to ensure that media access to the event is equal in both official languages?

CREATING A STRUCTURE

As early as possible in the planning process, the organizing committee must set up an official languages unit whose role is to provide support and guidance to other units with respect to implementing the language provisions. The unit will also be tasked with raising awareness among partners and staff of the importance of official languages, and with establishing relationships with the official language minority community. For the unit to have a true impact on decision making, it must be given sufficient authority and resources. All of the organizing committee's components must work closely with the official languages unit to ensure that all strategic and operational plans take official languages into consideration.

The organizing committee's senior management must stay firmly committed to staging an event that reflects linguistic duality, even under difficult circumstances. To demonstrate the importance of official languages, the organizing committee should adopt an internal language policy that defines the way in which it intends to meet requirements. To implement the policy, senior management must demonstrate leadership and inform the entire committee and all partners of the importance it places on fulfilling language requirements to ensure the event's success. Furthermore, the committee—and the management team in particular—must have a sufficient number of individuals who are bilingual or who understand the sensitivities of both language groups.

It would also be useful to set up an official languages advisory committee, composed of official languages experts and members of the various partner organizations. The advisory committee must include people with good credibility and a high level of authority. Key members of the official language communities should also sit on the committee. Representation from national and local Francophone organizations—or Anglophone organizations, if the event is being held in Quebec—should be a priority to ensure a variety of viewpoints.

KEY QUESTIONS

Organizing committee

- How will we ensure that the official languages unit has the resources and authority it needs to do its job effectively?
- How will our senior managers raise employee awareness of the importance of official languages for the event's success?
- Will we have a clear internal official languages policy that details how we intend to fulfill our language requirements?
- Will our team have enough people who understand the sensitivities and cultural references of both official language groups?
- How will we promote collaboration within the organizing committee to ensure a proper understanding of the impact of language requirements from an operational standpoint?
- Will we establish an official languages advisory committee that includes members from national and local organizations representing both official language groups?

DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE PLAN AND TRACKING PROGRESS

As the event draws nearer, there is less leeway to make changes and take corrective action. The key to success therefore lies in planning well in advance and being prepared for unforeseen circumstances. It is equally crucial to define expected results, performance indicators and reporting mechanisms.

From the outset, the organizing committee should develop a detailed document on official languages, with forecasts regarding the resources needed to fulfill its language obligations.

Canadian Heritage, or any other federal organization representing the Government of Canada, must monitor how preparations are progressing and keep a close watch to ensure that requirements are met. The organizing committee should report regularly to Canadian Heritage on the state of preparedness in terms of official languages. This is in the interest of all

concerned because partners will be able to propose solutions if it becomes clear along the way that the objectives may not be achieved.

In addition, the federal institutions that are called upon to participate in the event must begin planning as soon as possible so they can meet the increased demand—generated by the event—for services in both official languages. For example, they will need to determine whether it will be necessary to provide bilingual services during the event at service points that are not normally subject to official languages obligations.

Federal institutions need to monitor their own official languages performance and then report on their positive experiences and lessons learned. This will serve to determine how official languages were addressed so that the public's experience at future major events can be improved.

KEY QUESTIONS

Organizing committee and federal institutions

- How will we ensure that official languages are a key element in planning right from the start of preparations?
- How will we determine all of the official languages needs, as well as the financial resources required to fulfill those needs?
- Will matters relating to official languages be systematically on the agenda at our meetings? Who will be responsible for addressing them?
- Will our planning take possible delays into account and will it leave some leeway to react to changes (lower revenues, new service to offer, availability of bilingual resources, etc.)?
- How will we report on progress in organizing an event that is respectful of official languages?
- What performance indicators will enable us to evaluate the results of our efforts in the area of official languages?
- How will we share our success stories for future events?

Government of Canada

- How will we support the organizing committee so that it has sufficient resources and expertise?
- How will we monitor preparations, as they move forward, to ensure respect for official languages before, during and after the event?

ASSEMBLING THE TEAM

Recruitment

Recruiting a large number of bilingual volunteers and employees is a crucial challenge that must be met, because the ability to provide service to the public in both official languages depends on it. It is important to hire a sufficient number of bilingual workers to meet demand at all points of service to the public at all times. To make best use of their language skills, bilingual employees should be assigned to jobs that involve interaction with the public and participants. Candidates' language skills should be tested before hiring, for example by asking questions in both official languages during the interview or by giving candidates a written test.

Federal institutions also need to prepare a long time in advance, since large-scale events are sure to draw an influx of visitors and increase demand for services in both official languages at some of their offices. They will need to increase their staff's bilingual capacity, either by calling upon bilingual employees working in other offices or by recruiting additional staff and bilingual volunteers.

There are many ways to recruit bilingual resources, including the following:

- Collaborate with the region's official language minority community organizations, which have a large number of bilingual individuals.
- Place calls for applicants in the official language minority media.
- Call upon majority language organizations that are involved in second-language learning.
- Conduct awareness campaigns in official language minority schools or in institutions that offer immersion programs.
- Participate in bilingual employee recruitment fairs or call upon firms specializing in the field.
- Contact organizations that represent retired persons.
- Broaden the recruitment area.

Training and awareness

Volunteers and employees must also be made aware, as soon as they are hired, of the need to actively offer services in both official languages. Active offer means informing members of the public that they can obtain the information or service they need in the official language of their choice. After being greeted in English and French, it is equally important for the public to have access to the information or service they want as quickly as possible in the official language of their choice.

Unilingual employees and volunteers must therefore have clear instructions on how to go about enlisting the aid of a bilingual co-worker when someone addresses them in the other official language. Likewise, to help the public identify people who are able to provide service in both official languages, it would be appropriate for employees and volunteers to wear special identification, such as a badge.

KEY QUESTIONS

Organizing committee and federal institutions

- How will we ensure that we have enough bilingual staff and volunteers to cover all public service points at all times?
- How will we make sure employees and volunteers have the necessary language skills?
- How will we succeed in raising employee awareness of the importance of official languages?
- How will we provide training on the active offer of service in both official languages? How will we communicate to unilingual staff the procedure for enlisting the aid of a bilingual co-worker?
- What means will we use so that the public can easily identify bilingual employees and volunteers?
- How will we support employees who would like to acquire or perfect their second official language?

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Large-scale sporting events involve a considerable amount of communication with the public. The following are just some of the services required in both official languages:

- Signage and displays
- Backgrounders and promotional materials
- Web sites and social media communications
- Information transmitted verbally or visually during the event

When the organizing committee communicates with the public through the media, the minority language media must be included so that both official language communities can be reached.

It is also important to make sponsors aware of Canada's linguistic duality and to encourage the provinces and municipalities to work together to create a bilingual environment through services, documentation and signage in both official languages.

Translation and interpretation

Translating documents and providing interpretation services at public events are enormous tasks, so it is important to make sure that sufficient human and financial resources are available to meet all demands. The needs in these areas are sometimes underestimated, and they tend to increase significantly as the event draws closer. It is therefore wise to solicit, from the outset, the help of language professionals who have experience meeting high demand.

Using machine translation software or unskilled workers produces inadequate results. A poor-quality translation is a significant impediment to communicating and may have a negative impact on the organization's reputation. Likewise, given the obligation to inform both official language groups at the same time, publishing the translation of a document several hours or days after the original is not an acceptable practice.

It will be easier to meet unforeseen demands if translation turnaround times are taken into account at the planning stage and a back-up plan is in place. Disseminating information on short notice (for example, postponement of an event or a street closure) poses a considerable challenge, as does broadcasting emergency and safety-related information, but respect for official languages remains crucial.

KEY QUESTIONS

Organizing committee and federal institutions

- How will we check to make sure that we have sufficient human and financial resources for translation and interpretation services?
- What technical challenges will have to be resolved?
- How will we ensure translation quality?
- What measures will we take so that interpretation services are available at public activities relating to the event?
- How will we go about simultaneously publishing equivalent content in both official languages on the Web?
- How will we ensure that we have the resources required to fulfill our language obligations in the event of unforeseen circumstances or emergency situations?
- How will we ensure that service providers acting on our behalf serve the public in both official languages?
- How will we raise awareness among sponsors and provincial and municipal partners of the need for measures to serve the public in both official languages?
- How will we use official language minority media?

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The programming of major national or international sporting events in Canada is not usually limited to athletic competitions; it often includes various cultural and artistic events, such as performances, opening and closing ceremonies, and exhibitions.

When the Government of Canada contributes funding to cultural and artistic events, these events must include and represent both of the country's official language communities. Depending on the context, a fair representation of linguistic duality will take different forms beyond the official and protocol aspects of ceremonies. This is why it is vital that agreements clearly define how the organizing committee is to ensure that ceremonies and programming properly reflect the country's linguistic duality.

For example, the presence of both official languages in cultural activities applies equally to both the spoken and visual components of presentations. While it is important to have artists and professionals from both language groups take part in the organization of the event, it is also essential that both English and French be heard in the performances and ceremonies.

The Government of Canada must provide the committee with support so that it is fully aware of its official languages obligations in this area. The government must also retain the right to review content. For their part, organizers must have a good knowledge of the specific cultural characteristics of each language group.

Organizers must also ensure that artists and performers from the minority language group are featured prominently in high-profile cultural and artistic events. Obviously, the audience's composition should be considered, and the content of cultural events appropriately balanced. However, it is always essential to bear in mind the importance of reflecting the cultural richness and diversity of both official language communities.

KEY QUESTIONS

Organizing committee

- How will we make sure that the ceremonies and cultural programming faithfully reflect the two official language communities in all their richness and diversity?
- How will we ensure that English and French are balanced in the visual and spoken components of our programming?
- What measures will we take to ensure that the unit responsible for cultural events is aware of the need to reflect Canada's linguistic duality?
- How will we solicit and promote the participation of local official language communities and those in other parts of Canada?
- How will we make sure that artists and performers from the minority language group are featured prominently at cultural and artistic events?

Government of Canada

- How will we check to make sure that the agreements clearly define the organizing committee's responsibilities for representing and including linguistic duality in the ceremonies and cultural programming?
- How will we provide support to the committee so that it has a proper understanding of its obligations with respect to cultural and artistic events, and how can we retain the right to review content?
- What performance indicators will serve to evaluate compliance with obligations?

QUALITY CONTROL

A visit to the venues where the various activities are to be held will serve to determine whether everything is ready, particularly that:

- signage is in both official languages and free of errors;
- the documents to be distributed to the general public are available in both official languages;
- easily identifiable bilingual employees and volunteers are assigned to all service points;
- unilingual staff are familiar with the procedure for enlisting the aid of a bilingual co-worker;
- preparations are in place for safety and emergency services to be provided at any time in both official languages.

The quality-control visit should be conducted far enough in advance so that any necessary corrective actions can be taken.

ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, GO!

Organizing a major national or international sporting event carries its fair share of challenges. When planning begins, it may be difficult to see how official language obligations can be fully respected while meeting strict budget requirements. Nonetheless, if official languages are taken into account right from the initial planning stages, it is entirely possible to meet and even surpass language requirements, without exceeding the allocated resources.

First and foremost, the event must be planned far enough in advance, and collaborative relationships must be established with a variety of partners, including official language communities. In addition, if the organizing committee and federal institutions have a sufficient number of individuals who are attuned to the sensitivities and cultural references of both official language groups, things will run all the more smoothly.

QUICK REFERENCE

Establishing agreements

- Develop a clear, detailed and comprehensive agreement that defines each partner's roles and responsibilities with respect to official languages.
- Make sure that all partners are informed of the implications of the agreement.
- Encourage both official language communities to actively participate; for example, by signing a collaborative agreement with key national and local organizations.
- Ensure that the agreements with service providers include language requirements and that those requirements are met.
- Sign agreements with broadcasters that ensure equal media access to the event in both official languages.

Creating a structure

- Create an official languages unit within the organizing committee.
- Determine the roles that each unit within the organizing committee must play with respect to official languages.
- Encourage senior management and staff to commit to both official languages.
- Develop an internal language policy and communicate it to all parties involved.
- Make sure the team, and especially management, has enough people with an understanding of the sensitivities and cultural references of both official language groups.
- Create an official languages advisory committee and include official languages experts and key members of the official language communities.

Designing an effective plan and tracking progress

- Develop a document on the necessary resources and procedures to ensure respect for official languages.
- Determine objectives, expected results and performance indicators.
- Check that priority and sufficient resources are given to official languages, and that all needs in this area are fulfilled.
- Plan measures so that language provisions can be complied with in the event of delays, unforeseen circumstances, changes and emergency situations.
- Report regularly on the state of preparedness in relation to official languages.

Assembling the team

- Determine how many bilingual volunteers and employees are needed.
- Develop a strategy for recruiting bilingual resources.
- Evaluate the language skills of employees and volunteers before hiring them.
- Design a training and awareness program on official languages and the active offer of services.
- Assign bilingual resources strategically to make optimal use of their language skills.
- Find a way to identify bilingual employees and volunteers so that the public can easily recognize them.

Communicating with the public in both official languages

- Make a list of all services to be provided in both languages.
- Determine which service points will require bilingual employees and volunteers.
- Ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are available for translation and interpretation services.
- Early in the planning stage, secure the services of professional translators and interpreters who have experience handling high demand.
- Find the means to ensure translation quality.
- Plan measures to meet translation needs in the event of unforeseen circumstances and emergency situations.
- Ensure that service providers serve the public in both official languages.
- Make sponsors, service providers and provincial and municipal partners aware of the need to serve the public in both official languages.
- Make use of the official language minority media.

Cultural activities

- Develop agreements that define the way in which cultural events are to reflect linguistic duality.
- Ensure that organizers of these events have a good understanding of the specific cultural characteristics of each official language group.
- Ensure that programming for cultural events includes and represents both official language communities.
- Confirm the balance of English and French in the visual and spoken components of the programming.
- Invite artists and performers from the official language minority community to take part in cultural and artistic events.

Quality control

- Tour the venues to make sure everything is ready to receive the public in both official languages.

On your mark, get set, go!

- Provide all visitors and participants with an opportunity to enjoy a bilingual experience.

This Quick Reference list was produced by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages as part of the document entitled *Organizing a Major Sporting Event in Canada: A Practical Guide to Promoting Official Languages*.

La version française de cet aide-mémoire se trouve en ligne sur le site Web du Commissariat aux langues officielles à www.languesofficielles.gc.ca.