



● Information sheet:

Designating bilingual positions

A language policy establishes that services will be provided to members or clients and employees in both official languages. To actively offer services in both English and French, certain positions within your organization will need to be designated as bilingual.

What is a bilingual position?

When the functions of a job must be carried out in English and in French, the language requirements are said to be bilingual. When the language requirements of a position are bilingual, your organization must then determine the level of language proficiency required in each of the official languages. The linguistic proficiency must:

- reflect the functions and responsibilities of the position to be carried out; and
- ensure that services of comparable quality are provided in both official languages.

Identifying language skills

When you designate a bilingual position, you must clearly define:

- the language skills (for example: reading, writing and oral interaction) required in the two official languages;
- the functions and responsibilities that require the language skills; and
- the proficiency level of each skill required.

For example, if a bilingual reception position requires only basic reading and writing but high oral interaction skills in one language then the same requirements would apply to the other language. Also, not all skills may be required for certain bilingual positions. For example, if writing is not required for a position, no level of proficiency would be assigned for that skill. Refer to the "**Bilingual position profile**" **practical tool**.

Establishing language proficiency levels

Your organization should develop standard descriptions of duties that are performed for each language skill (for example: reading, writing and oral interaction) and establish proficiency levels for the identified skills. A hierarchical numbering (I, II, III) or alphabetical (A, B, C) system may be used to attribute level of proficiency in the skill. Refer to the "**Bilingual position profile**" **practical tool**.

Assessing language proficiency

Testing or scoring an applicant for language proficiency is not permitted unless the language requirements are specifically job related. Testing may be required to determine the level of proficiency in the required language skills (reading, writing and oral interaction). Testing may be arranged through an outside firm such as a language training institution that specializes in the assessment of language proficiency. Be sure to provide the firm with a copy of the job description

and your organization's standards for proficiency levels in language skills.

Good employment practices

As with any employment qualification, language qualifications must be relevant to the duties and responsibilities of the position. A job description should specify which official language skills are required and the levels of language proficiency required to meet the job requirements. Determining proficiency in a language is only appropriate when it is specifically required for a job. To learn more about this and other appropriate screening and selection procedures in employment, consult your province or territory's human rights agencies. These agencies provide guidelines for employers to ensure that they avoid any form of discrimination in employment practices, applications and advertising. Refer to the **Additional resources** below.

Additional resources

The information found here explains the Government of Canada's procedure for assigning bilingual positions; however it may be a useful reference for organizations.

Determining the Linguistic Profile for Bilingual Positions, Public Service Commission of Canada

www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/ppc/sle_pg_06_e.htm

For information concerning Canadian human rights and employment practices, consult the following websites

Canadian Human Rights Commission – Federally Regulated Organizations

www.chrc-ccdp.ca/discrimination/federally_regulated-en.asp

Canadian and Human Rights Commission - Provincial and Territorial Human Rights Agencies

www.chrc-ccdp.ca/links/default-en.asp