



Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
aux langues
officielles

GUIDE ON THE LINGUISTIC IDENTIFICATION OF POSITIONS



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Disclaimer: The results obtained using this guide may vary depending on a number of factors, including how the guide is used and the user's level of knowledge. The guide also may not be suitable for all situations. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages therefore cannot guarantee that the results will be in full compliance with the requirements of section 91 of the *Official Languages Act*. We encourage you to always consult your institution's official languages staff when establishing the linguistic identification of a position.

Note: Before starting, it is strongly recommended that the work description for the position to be staffed be checked to ensure that it accurately reflects the duties performed by the incumbent and that the work unit's organization chart be up to date.

Step 1: Functions of the position related to Part IV (Communications with and Services to the Public) or Part V (Language of Work) of the *Official Languages Act*

The purpose of this step is to identify the functions performed by a position's incumbent that require communicating with or providing services to the public, or respecting the language-of-work rights of federal public servants.

- Does the incumbent of the position have to communicate orally or in writing with [the public](#) from a [designated office](#) that is required to provide communications with and services to the public in both official languages?
 Yes No

- Does the incumbent hold an assistant deputy minister position or an equivalent-level position?
 Yes (The position must be identified as [Bilingual](#) with a linguistic profile of at least **CBC/CBC**.) No

- Is the incumbent a manager or executive who is responsible for a [designated bilingual region](#) and whose functions include supervising staff; participating as a regular member of the institution's management team; or playing a significant role in exercising the institution's authority to direct or to provide services to other institutions, in representing the institution to the public or employees of the institution, or in coordinating the programs or activities of employees in bilingual regions?
 Yes (The position must be identified as [Bilingual](#) with a linguistic profile of at least **CBC/CBC**.) No

- Does the incumbent have to supervise employees who work in a [designated bilingual region](#) (e.g., assign tasks, establish priorities, evaluate performance, approve leave)?
 - Yes (The position must be identified as [Bilingual](#) with a linguistic profile of at least **CBC/CBC**.)
 - No

- Does the incumbent have to provide [central services](#) or [personal services](#) to employees located in a [designated bilingual region](#)?
 - Yes
 - No

- Does the incumbent have to communicate with employees of another federal institution located in a [designated bilingual region](#) as part of services provided by a [central federal institution](#) that has authority to direct or serve it?
 - Yes
 - No

- Does the incumbent have to create a [work environment conducive to the use of both official languages](#) in a [designated bilingual region](#) (e.g., manage projects, provide functional supervision, mentor or coach, lead or chair meetings, make presentations, represent the institution at events)?
 - Yes
 - No

- Does the incumbent have to be able to communicate in both official languages for any other reason?
 - Yes
 - No

- If the answer to **ALL** of the questions above is **No**, the position must be identified as one of the following:
 - **English or French Essential (either/or)**, if the position is located in a [designated bilingual region](#), where the incumbent can work entirely in the official language of his or her choice
 - **English Essential**, if the position is located in a region where English is the predominant language
 - **French Essential**, if the position is located in a region where French is the predominant language.

- If the answer to **AT LEAST ONE** of the questions above is **Yes**, go to [Step 2](#).

Step 2: Language requirements of the position and bilingual composition of the team

The purpose of this step is to establish the appropriate [language requirements](#) (English Essential, French Essential or Bilingual)* for a position, taking into consideration the bilingual composition of the team that the position is part of (i.e., the composition of the team in terms of the [language requirements](#) of positions).

*Note: For the purposes of this guide (i.e., for positions that have functions related to parts IV or V of the Act) the “English or French Essential” (either/or) language requirement is not relevant.

- Are the functions for which a **Yes** response was given in Step 1 shared among several colleagues of equivalent groups and levels within a team (i.e., are they included in the other colleagues’ official functions)?
 - If the answer is **No**, the position must be identified as [Bilingual](#).
- If the answer is **Yes**, does the composition of the team, in terms of the [language requirements](#) of equivalent positions (same group and level), reflect the percentage of requests for communications or services in each official language while ensuring that communications and services of equal quality are always available in both official languages?
 - If the answer is **Yes**, the position must be identified as one of the following:
 - [Bilingual](#), if the incumbent is required to interact with English-speaking and French-speaking members of the public or federal employees, or with people whose language preference is not known or identifiable
 - **English Essential**, if the incumbent is required to interact only with English-speaking members of the public or federal employees
 - **French Essential**, if the incumbent is required to interact only with French-speaking members of the public or federal employees.
 - If the answer is **No**, the position must be identified as [Bilingual](#).

Step 3: Linguistic profile

The purpose of this step is to analyze the duties to be performed by the incumbent in both official languages in order to establish the appropriate linguistic profile for the position based on the [Qualification Standards in Relation to Official Languages](#).

Written comprehension in the incumbent's second official language

- Do the functions for which a **Yes** response was given in Step 1 require the incumbent to be able to do any of the following, for example?
 - ✓ Understand texts dealing with a wide variety of work-related topics
 - ✓ Understand complex details, inferences and fine points of meaning and have good comprehension of specialized or less familiar material
 - ✓ Read work-related texts—e.g., policy papers, research papers, technical reports, books, complex contract or specifications, legislation or regulations—in order to ensure completeness and accuracy, extract details for action or interpretation, review for meaning and tone when they were prepared by others, obtain an in-depth understanding of the content, assess implications, provide comments or make recommendations
- If the answer is **Yes**, the proficiency level required for **written comprehension** in the incumbent's second official language is **C**.
- If the answer is **No**, the level of proficiency required for **written comprehension** in the incumbent's second official language is **B**. At this level, the incumbent must be able to understand most descriptive or factual material on work-related topics in order to be able to identify specific details and distinguish main from subsidiary ideas, extract information or specific details required for the job, understand the general idea of the content or verify that the content is factually correct when the material was prepared by others. A person reading at this level will have difficulty reading texts with complex grammar and less common vocabulary.

Written expression in the incumbent's second official language

- Do the functions for which a **Yes** response was given in Step 1 require the incumbent to be able to do any of the following, for example?
 - ✓ Write explanations or descriptions in a variety of informal and formal work-related situations
 - ✓ Write texts where ideas are developed and presented in a coherent manner
 - ✓ Modify or correct texts to improve meaning, tone, clarity and conciseness using grammar and spelling that are generally appropriate and require few corrections
 - ✓ Write work-related correspondence, briefing notes, memoranda, reports, recommendations, research papers, comprehensive

summaries or detailed presentations in order to provide or request detailed facts and reasons or to provide information or comment on contentious issues

- If the answer is **Yes**, the level of proficiency required for **written expression** in the incumbent's second official language is **C**.
- If the answer is **No**, the level of proficiency required for **written expression** in the incumbent's second official language is **B**. At this level, the incumbent must be able to write short descriptive or factual texts, for example, to communicate explicit information on work-related topics. A person writing at this level will be able to communicate the basic information, but the text will require some corrections in grammar and vocabulary, as well as revision for style.
- ! **Editing and translation services:** If the nature of the functions allows and if the incumbent has access to editing and translation services, a level B in written expression may suffice where a level C would normally have been required.

Oral proficiency in the incumbent's second official language

- Do the functions for which a **Yes** response was given in Step 1 require the incumbent to be able to do any of the following, for example?
 - ✓ Talk about sensitive situations where the understanding and expression of subtle, abstract or complicated ideas are required or where unfamiliar work-related topics must be dealt with
 - ✓ Support opinions and understand and express hypothetical and conditional ideas
 - ✓ Give and understand explanations and descriptions involving complicated details, hypothetical questions or complex and abstract ideas
 - ✓ Give and understand detailed accounts of events, actions taken or procedures to be followed
 - ✓ Discuss or explain policies, procedures, regulations, programs and services relating to an area of work
 - ✓ Deal with situations requiring persuasion/negotiation, 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
 - ✓ Counsel and give advice to employees or clients on sensitive or complex issues
 - ✓ Participate as a member of a selection board, interview board or assessment team
- If the answer is **Yes**, the level of proficiency required for **oral proficiency** in the incumbent's second official language is **C**.

- If the answer is **No**, the level of proficiency required for **oral proficiency** in the incumbent's second official language is **B**. At this level, the incumbent must be able to depart from the routine use of the second language and sustain a conversation on concrete topics, report on actions taken, give straightforward instructions to employees and provide factual descriptions and explanations. A person speaking at this level would have a limited ability to deal with situations involving hypothetical ideas and should not be expected to cope with situations that are sensitive or that require the understanding or expression of subtle or abstract ideas.

Note: Level A is used only in assessing individual skills; it is not used in establishing the linguistic profile of a position. Code P is reserved exclusively for language specialists, such as writers, editors, translators and teachers.

We strongly recommend that you keep a copy of the results in your staffing file.

Definitions

Central federal institution

Central institutions (which serve or have authority over other federal institutions) include the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the Department of Finance Canada, the Public Service Commission of Canada, the Department of Justice Canada, the Canada School of Public Service, Public Services and Procurement Canada, and other institutions listed in the [Common Services Policy](#).

Central services

Central services are provided by the federal institution to its employees to enable them to perform their duties. They include legal, administrative, security, library, procurement, instructional and training services.

Designated office

An office is designated as bilingual for communications with and services to the public if it meets at least one of the criteria set out in the *Official Languages Act* or in the *Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations*. Here are some examples of the criteria:

- Head or central office of the institution
- Located in the National Capital Region
- Belongs to an institution that reports directly to Parliament
- There is significant demand for services in both official languages
- Due to the nature of the office, it is reasonable that communications with and services from that office be available in both English and French

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat maintains a publicly available directory of the designated bilingual offices for communications with and services to the public. However, this directory may be incomplete or out of date; therefore, the above-mentioned criteria should be independently verified.

Language requirements

The term “language requirements” is used in this section strictly as defined in Appendix 1 of the Treasury Board of Canada’s [Directive on Official Languages for People Management](#).

Personal services

Personal services are provided by the federal institution to its employees on an individual basis or for personal reasons. They include payroll, employee benefits and health care services.

The public

The public includes any person, group of people (professional associations or others) or organization or company (other than a Crown corporation) in Canada or abroad, as well as any representative of another level of government, who communicates with or receives a service from a federal institution, excluding officers and employees of institutions subject to the *Official Languages Act* when carrying out their duties.

Work environment conducive to the use of both official languages

A work environment is conducive to the use of both official languages when the organizational culture systematically encourages employees to use the official language of their choice in the workplace.