



Office of the  
Commissioner of  
Official Languages

Commissariat  
aux langues  
officielles

ENG  
FR

Effective practices  
for chairing

**BILINGUAL MEETINGS**

and

**EXTERNALLY SOURCED  
PRESENTATIONS**

[www.officiallanguages.gc.ca](http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca)



# THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE IS **BILINGUAL.**

In regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes, employees have the right to work and be supervised in the official language of their choice. This includes meetings and presentations in which they participate.



## GOOD PRACTICES

FOR HOLDING A BILINGUAL MEETING WITH EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE VARIED LEVELS OF **BILINGUALISM**

The chair is skilled in both official languages and ensures that all employees can participate fully in the meeting in the official language of their choice. The chair ensures that the meeting is in both official languages from start to finish.

At the beginning of the meeting, the chair reminds the participants, in both official languages, that they are free to use the official language of their choice.

The person who takes the meeting notes is skilled in both official languages, and comments made in each official language are reflected in the notes.

The invitation, agenda, handouts and minutes are distributed in both official languages at the same time.

**No other measure is required,** because in principle all the participants either speak both official languages or are receptively bilingual.

## GOOD PRACTICES

FOR HOLDING A BILINGUAL MEETING WITH EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE VARIED LEVELS OF BILINGUALISM, AND SOME OF WHOM ARE **UNILINGUAL**

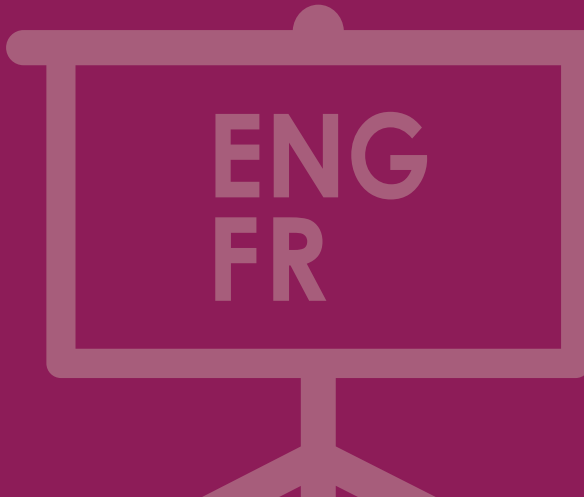
**The chair must give a brief summary in English of the key points raised by participants speaking in French, and vice versa.** This method does slow down the meeting a little, but adds enormously to common understanding. It is therefore important for the chair to plan for the necessary time.

# BENEFITS OF BILINGUAL MEETINGS

Optimizes participation of all employees, because most employees are more productive in the official language of their choice.

Maintains employees' skills in their second official language, as they are exposed to both official languages.

Shows respect for everyone present.



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Other examples of

## GOOD PRACTICES



**LANGUAGE KEEPER:** During a bilingual meeting, the chair assigns someone to keep track of the balance between the use of English and French, and to advise when the balance needs to be readjusted.



**EXPLAIN HOW THE BILINGUAL MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED:** The chair explains ahead of time that each person's comments will be summarized in the other official language so that everyone can follow the conversation, and that this may result in occasional interruptions.



**TRUST:** Participants trust that the chair can summarize their comments effectively.



**NEVER GIVE UP:** Practice makes perfect. Patience and willingness to experiment are essential. Initial resistance is normal.



**LEADERSHIP IS KEY:** Leadership of the chair and of each participant in the meeting is key, as well as the leadership of the supervisors and managers at all levels who walk the talk.

# EXTERNALLY SOURCED PRESENTATIONS

Federal institutions often contract external resources to deliver presentations to their employees. In this context, they must not lose sight of their obligation to deliver information to their employees in both official languages.

The Good Practices checklist on the next page applies to external presenters, educators, trainers\* and conference panellists.



\*Please note that for statutory or mandatory training, employees have the right to receive instruction in the official language of their choice. These types of training must therefore be provided separately in English and French.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## for externally sourced presentations

### BEFORE



**THE ORGANIZER** clearly conveys to the presenter what is expected in terms of communications in both official languages well in advance of the presentation.



**THE ORGANIZER** ensures that materials distributed before the presentation are in both official languages and are of equal quality.

### DURING



**THE ORGANIZER** introduces the guests in both official languages and explains that the presentation will be delivered in both official languages.



**THE ORGANIZER** ensures that all presentation materials and visual aids are in both official languages. Each slide must be bilingual. Alternating the slides from one language to the other means that unilingual participants cannot understand everything.



**THE ORGANIZER** ensures that the presenter is bilingual and able to switch from one language to the other or that two people deliver the presentation together—one in French and one in English.



**THE ORGANIZER** ensures that if the presenter is unilingual and alone, and simultaneous interpretation is not available, the following practice becomes mandatory:

- A summary is provided in French of the key points made by the English-speaking presenter, or vice versa; therefore, it is important for the organizer to plan for the necessary time. This practice adds enormously to common understanding.



**THE PRESENTER** or **ORGANIZER** translates each question during the question period and the main points of the answer for the benefit of all participants, unless simultaneous interpretation is available.

## **AFTER**



**THE ORGANIZER** ensures that materials distributed after the presentation are in both official languages and are of equal quality.



# ENG FR

## GENERAL REMINDERS ABOUT LANGUAGE OF WORK

### **RIGHT OF EMPLOYEES AND OBLIGATIONS OF**

**SUPERVISORS:** The right of employees to work in the official language of their choice in regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes creates an obligation for managers to supervise their employees in the official language of their choice and takes precedence over the managers' own language rights.

### **HOLISTIC APPROACH TO LANGUAGE OF WORK:**

Bilingual meetings are only one of the elements covered under Part V of the *Official Languages Act*. Part V must be implemented in its entirety.

### **SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC VS. LANGUAGE OF WORK:**

The right of members of the public to be served in the official language of their choice takes precedence over the right of employees to work in the official language of their choice. Under section 31 of the Act, whenever Part IV is in conflict with Part V, Part IV prevails.