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# Building a linguistically inclusive workplace: Leadership Tips

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## What is linguistic insecurity when it comes to official languages?

Linguistic insecurity in English or French is the idea that people aren't comfortable using the languages, whether it's using their first or their second official language.

Linguistic insecurity can have real impacts on public service employees; in our survey of 11,000 federal public servants, respondents who experienced linguistic insecurity said they felt judged, embarrassed, hesitant and/or apologetic.

## Did you know?

Generally speaking, under Part V of the *Official Languages Act*, public servants have the right to work in either official language in the National Capital Region, in New Brunswick, and in bilingual regions of Quebec and Ontario.

“ Everyone has a role to play in creating a linguistically inclusive workplace, and leaders can really set the tone. By using both official languages and encouraging others to do so also, you are helping to create the conditions for a workplace culture that values English and French equally. That’s building linguistic security in Canada’s public service. ”

— Raymond Th  berge, *Commissioner of Official Languages*

## <sup>1</sup><sub>2</sub><sub>3</sub> ≡ Top ten practices for leaders

1. Actively use both official languages when addressing employees and share your challenges and experiences learning your second official language.
2. Encourage employees to practise their second official language at work.
3. Encourage employees to use the lesser-used language at work, whether in the office or working online, in meetings and in informal situations, like chatting with colleagues.
4. Encourage employees to submit documents and write emails and messages in the lesser-used language at work.
5. Provide employees with access to training and to opportunities to learn, improve and maintain their second official language skills, including by ensuring budget availability and a manageable workload.
6. Raise awareness that many employees may want to use the lesser-used language at work, whether it’s their first official language or their second official language.

7. Raise awareness that many employees can understand their second official language even if they don't necessarily speak it, and normalize the practice of Francophone and Anglophone colleagues using their first languages with each other.  
(Remember: those in a senior, supervisory or employee service delivery role are still required to use the official language of the employee's choice in Part V areas).
8. Encourage second-language learners to ask colleagues to help them practise.
9. Encourage employees to avoid switching to the first official language of second-language learners who are trying to practise.
10. Discourage the practice of over-correcting or frequently commenting on a second-language learner's imperfect English or French. Normalize mistakes as part of the learning process.



You can also encourage your department to take a closer look at our **linguistic insecurity** report and to participate in the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' **Maturity Model** exercise. An entire section is devoted to language of work.

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