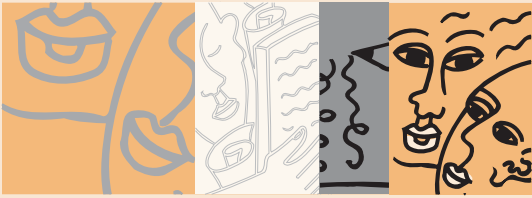
Western Cape Government

Cultural Affairs and Sport

BETTER TOGETHER.

WESTERN CAPE LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
IKOMITI YEELWIMI YASENTSHONA KOLONI
WES-KAAPSE TAALKOMITEE





WESTERN CAPE LANGUAGE POLICY

The official language policy
of the Western Cape Government

WESTERN CAPE LANGUAGE POLICY

Compiled by the Western Cape Language Committee, a statutory body of the Western Cape Provincial Government

1. PURPOSE

To give effect to

- sections 6 and 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996);
- section 5 of the Constitution of the Western Cape (Act 1 of 1998);
- the Western Cape Provincial Languages Act (Act 13 of 1998);
- the Pan South African Language Board Act (Act 59 of 1995);
- the National Language Policy Framework (2003);
- the Batho Pele principle;
- IKapa elihlumayo (growing and sharing the Cape), the development strategy of the Western Cape;
- the South African Government's call for social cohesion;
- the development of the provincial and national economy.

2. GOALS

2.1 To promote the use of the three official languages of the Western Cape, namely Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English, by the provincial and local governments[1] of the Western Cape;

2.2 To elevate the status and advance the use of those indigenous languages of historically diminished status used by the people of the Western Cape, such as the Khoi and San languages;

2.3 To ensure that the Western Cape is a caring home for all by promoting multilingualism;

2.4 To support the Batho Pele initiative of impartial service delivery by promoting equal access to public services and programmes by removing communication or language barriers;

2.5 To give increasing effect to the equal constitutional status of the three official languages of the Western Cape;

2.6 To empower and affirm speakers of previously marginalised languages;

2.7 To eradicate the serious marginalisation of isiXhosa in the public service by resourcing and promoting the development and awareness of its official status;

2.8 To foster respect and protect language rights, thereby avoiding the use of language for exploitation and domination based on gender, race, class, age, religion, culture or sexual orientation, or language that condones violence;

2.9 To ensure social cohesion and improve relationships by promoting language diversity;

2.10 To contribute to iKapa elihlumayo (growing and sharing the Cape) through training and service in languages understood by different language groups;

2.11 To promote and ensure respect of other official languages (e.g. SeSotho) and heritage languages in the Western Cape;

2.12 To create awareness about the needs of the hearing impaired;

2.13 To develop language resources by enabling and supporting the training of language professionals.

2.14 To encourage language use that is accessible to all.

3. POLICY PROVISIONS FOR THE USE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE WESTERN CAPE BY THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 The official languages of the Province are Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English. These languages may be used in any debates and other proceedings of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament and its committees. The Western Cape Parliament must make provision for interpreting services for members from and into the three official languages during sittings of the Provincial Parliament and any of its committees. Sign language interpreting must be provided where necessary.

3.2 The official record of debates of the Provincial Parliament must be kept in the official languages in which the debates took place. Translations of any sections of the record into any of the relevant official languages must be made available by the Secretary to the Provincial Parliament within a reasonable period after the debate.

3.3 All legislation, official reports and resolutions of the Provincial Parliament and its committees must be made available in all three official languages. The Provincial Parliament may make practical arrangements to cause legislation, official reports and resolutions drawn up in one official language to be

available, within a reasonable period, in the other two official languages.

3.4 A bill introduced in the Provincial Parliament must upon introduction be available in at least two official languages. A system must be implemented which rotates the choice of two languages equitably amongst the three official languages of the Province. The Secretary to Parliament must keep a centralised register in order to regulate the rotation of the languages in bills to be introduced to the Provincial Parliament.

3.5 A notice of motion or a formal motion in the Provincial Parliament must be available in all three official languages. The Provincial Parliament may make practical arrangements to cause motions drawn up in one official language to be available, within a reasonable period, in the other two official languages.

4. OFFICIAL NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

4.1 All official notices issued by the provincial government for general public information, must be issued in Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English. Local governments must give due consideration to the language preferences of their residents in this regard.

4.2 All official notices and advertisements published by provincial and local governments must, in case of publication in the Provincial Gazette, be published in Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English. When published in other newspapers, it is sufficient to publish such documents, notices or advertisements only in the language in which the newspaper concerned appears. If there is no newspaper published in a particular language,

such notices or advertisements must be published in that official language in another newspaper.

5. COMMUNICATION WITH AND SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

5.1 Every organ or institution of the provincial or local government must, in its oral, written and electronic communication with and rendering of services to the public, ensure that these are carried out in the most appropriate manner, with the assistance of interpreters and translators and other technical means such as simulcast and subtitling, in any of the three official languages of the Western Cape, depending on the language usage and needs of the residents.

5.2 Any member of the public in the Western Cape may use a) any one of the three official languages of the Western Cape in his or her communication with any institution of the provincial or local government, and b) be served in any of the three official languages at or by any institution of the provincial or local government where there is a substantial need for communication and services in that language based on the language needs and preferences of the community, and it can reasonably be expected of the institution concerned to communicate and render services in that language, with due consideration to the National Education Language Policy.

5.3 In the case of written and electronic communication between the provincial and local governments and residents, the provincial official language of the residents' choice must be used. If the provincial or local government initiates the communication, the language profile of the recipient will determine the languages to be used. Subject to periodic language audits, provincial and local government publications

shall be issued in the language(s) of the target audience.

5.4 International communication on the part of provincial and local governments will usually be in English or in the preferred language of the country concerned.

6. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

6.1 Provincial and local governments must in their various structures each reach sufficient consensus on their working languages for internal oral communication, intra- and inter-departmentally, subject to the proviso that no person shall be prevented from using the language of his or her preference, at any given time.

6.2 Provincial and local government structures must in their various structures each reach sufficient consensus on their working languages for internal written and electronic communication, intra- and inter-departmentally, provided that every effort be made to comply with the language code of conduct.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local governments must determine the language usage and preferences of their communities within the enabling provincial language policy framework.

Upon the determination of the language usage and preferences of the residents, local governments must, in consultation with their communities, develop, publicise and implement language policies.

8. PRIVATE SECTOR

8.1 Provincial and local governments shall encourage and advise private enterprises to develop and implement their own language policies in accordance with the framework of the Provincial Language Policy.

8.2 Provincial and local governments shall endeavour to promote the most important languages of trade and tourism such as German, French and Japanese. Provincial and local governments shall advise non-governmental organisations and the private sector in this regard, e.g. in regard to planning and the formulation of policy.

9. IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

Where an organ or institution of the provincial or local government uses signage and directions to identify any of its offices or facilities, such signage and directions must be in the three official languages of the Western Cape. The three official languages of the Western Cape must be used equitably on road signs and direction signs on roads that do not form part of the RTRN. As far as local road signs, direction signs and street names are concerned, due consideration must be given to local communities' language use and preferences.

How will we implement the Western Cape Language Policy?

According to the Western Cape Language Policy the following aspects regarding language and communication need to receive attention in order to guarantee the successful, gradual realisation of practical multilingualism in the Western Cape Provincial Government.

An incremental approach should be followed with regard to the implementation of the language policy by provincial government departments. This requires that the specific actions mentioned below be undertaken to support and promote language policy implementation activities.

STAFFING

Central Language Unit (Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport)

- The central Language Unit responsible for driving and monitoring language policy implementation in the Western Cape Government will be situated in the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport.
- The central Language Unit will also be responsible for providing translation and interpreting services to all departments as well as developing awareness raising instruments in collaboration with departments.

Language Units (Other departments)

- Language professionals will be appointed to expand larger departments' capacity to deal with language policy implementation whilst medium and small departments will have a language coordinator to manage language matters.

- The language coordinators in departments will liaise with each other and the central Language Unit on a regular basis regarding quality control, terminology development and monitoring of language policy implementation. These units are also encouraged to liaise with other language roleplayers (e.g. the Pan South African Language Board, Western Cape Language Committee, National Department of Arts and Culture, South African Translators' Institute) regarding language matters pertaining to the three official languages of the Western Cape as well as Sign Language and Khoisan languages.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Training

- Departments must encourage its staff to learn the three official languages and Sign Language.
- Training programmes for language acquisition of the three official languages must be organised by departments.
- It is important that frontline staff be required to undergo language acquisition training in order to assist the public in the official language of preference.

Awareness

- Awareness raising campaigns will be hosted throughout the provincial government to promote multilingualism, encourage the use of the three official languages and Sign Language as well as create an awareness and sensitivity of language needs and rights of staff and clients.
- Each department must be proactive in promoting multilingualism, and staff and clients should be encouraged to make use of their language rights.

LANGUAGE SURVEYS

- Surveys regarding language needs and preferences of staff and clients are to be conducted periodically for use in determining language practice per department.
- Language proficiency surveys must also be conducted internally by departments on a regular basis to determine the linguistic needs and capabilities of staff and serve as basis for developing methods to improve language skills in government.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING

- Departments must make available translation and interpreting services when necessary, e.g. at public events and internal meetings.
- All documents for translation and/or editing will be forwarded to the central Language Unit via departmental language coordinators. Documents will be translated and edited in-house or outsourced to a capable pool of translators.
- Departments must submit requests for the provision of interpreting services to the central Language Unit timeously in order to allow sufficient time for arrangements. Sign Language interpreting for deaf persons must also be accommodated.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- A code of conduct regarding language use and multilingualism must be developed by a forum of all departmental language coordinators and adhered to by departments.
- Each provincial department in collaboration with the central Language Unit has to apply the language policy to its unique circumstances.
- Departments must continuously ensure that staff and clients

are sensitised to the value of multilingualism as a tool for building social cohesion, promoting economic development and consolidating democratic government through respect for language and cultural diversity.

- Departments have to ensure that notices are placed in all buildings and offices, informing the public that it promotes multilingualism and that officials will make every effort to use the official language preferred by the client.
- Departments must ensure that all staff members accommodate the language use and preferences of other officials with courtesy.
- During the recruitment and selection process for filling vacancies preference should be given to persons with proficiency in all three official languages.

MONEY MATTERS

- Departments must make financial resources available to facilitate language planning and training, language policy development and implementation, language resources and language audits in order to meet the obligations outlined above.

COMMUNICATION BY PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

External communication refers to oral and written communication with the public of the Western Cape. All communication with the public must be in the three official languages of the province or the language of preference of the target audience. Where three official languages are used it is important to establish what the language of preference of the target audience is and not make assumptions based on the language or languages spoken by the majority of people in the area. The language policy indicates the following pertaining to written and oral communication:

Written communication

The following information has to be published or made available in the three official languages of the Western Cape, i.e. Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English.

- All legislation, official reports and resolutions.
- All official notices.
- Research reports or an executive summary thereof.
- All exhibitions and marketing material.
- All advertisements.
- All public materials related to HIV/AIDS and other health issues.
- Signage (including instructions to and directions at events).
- Electronic communication with the broad public. Individual responses should be written in the language in which the letter or request was received.

Oral communication

- Public meetings and events must be held in all three official languages or the language of preference of the target audience. Officials should obtain the services of an interpreter where there is a need.
- All campaigns must be held in the three official languages or the language of preference of the target audience.
- Language preference should be considered in offering training and presenting workshops as well as sourcing of speakers and facilitators from different language groups.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

- All forms and official communication with staff have to be translated and made available in the three official languages of the Western Cape.

- Working languages per department: the principle of multilingualism should always be borne in mind. Also, officials should be encouraged to have a linguistic etiquette i.e. accommodate speakers who cannot understand a specific language.
- Meetings: the language preference and competence of the people attending a meeting should be taken into consideration. This has to be established before the meeting starts. Effective communication will take precedence over language preference. Language should be used to promote inclusion and participation in decision-making.

IN CONCLUSION

The initial phase of language policy implementation, whilst presenting its share of obstacles and achievements, will prove to departments the value of a policy of multilingualism via improved service delivery and a satisfied community in line with Batho Pele objectives. Through active implementation of the language policy departments will contribute to the vision of a multilingual community in the Western Cape that respects one another's languages.

The acceptance of the Western Cape Language Policy and its implementation plan by provincial government is significant, as the Western Cape is at the forefront in adhering to the constitutional principle of affording everyone the right to use the language of his or her choice.

Finally, through the realisation of this basic right the Western Cape Government will move a step closer in truly making the Western Cape a home for all.