

# **MANTSOPA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**



## **OFFICIAL LANGUAGE POLICY**

## **Mantsopa Local Municipality Official Language Policy**

<b><i>Next Review Date</i></b>	When required
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### **Approval of Policy**

Please note that the implementation of the policy contained in this document is subject to approval and signing off by all relevant Heads and/or Committees, including but not limited to:

- Municipal Manager; and
- Municipal Council.

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## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The municipality operates in a diverse environment in the delivery of services to the community, which in turn involve internal and external communications. A key aspect of that diversity relates to language.
- 1.2 The municipality is accordingly required to provide direction on the languages in which it conducts its business.
- 1.3 The core objectives of this policy are therefore to –
  - 1.3.1 Give effect to the municipality's legal obligations – e.g. Sections 9 and 86 of the Constitution; Sections 18.2 and 21.2 of the Municipal Systems Act; the National Language Policy Framework; the Principles of Batho Pele; the Promotion of Access to Information Act;
  - 1.3.2 Provide guidance on the official languages to be used in official communications between internal and external stakeholders in a manner that respects individual preference and with due regard to optimum service delivery and organisational effectiveness;
  - 1.3.3 Encourage multilingualism, particularly with respect to the official languages of communication adopted by the municipality;
  - 1.3.4 Promote optimum service delivery by advancing equal access to municipal services and programs through the removal of communication barriers;
  - 1.3.5 Make available mechanisms that will facilitate effective communication with people living with communication disabilities - e.g. hearing and sight impediments;
  - 1.3.6 Promote the equitable use of the languages adopted by the municipality for official communications.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Officials and Councillors in their official communications within, for and on behalf of, the municipality.
- 2.2 This policy therefore regulates communications between –
  - 2.2.1 Officials and Councillors in their official dealings with one another;
  - 2.2.2 Officials and Councillors in their official communications with external stakeholders;
  - and

- 2.2.3 Contractors, nominees and agents of the municipality who act in the interests of or on behalf of the municipality.

### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 Official working language(s) means: the languages adopted by the municipality for official communications.
- 3.2 Internal communication means: communication between Officials and Councillors in carrying out their official duties.
- 3.3 External communication means: communication with the public and external stakeholders in general.

### **4. Principles**

- 4.1 The municipality is required by law and its very nature to be customer-driven. It will therefore communicate in the languages understandable to the community with due regard to practicalities and affordability.
- 4.2 All Officials and Councillors have an important role to play in creating a work environment where diversity of language is respected and does not become a source of division or exclusion, however subtle.
- 4.3 Officials and Councillors must be flexible and sensitive to the language needs of others and take care that language differences do not become a barrier to communication or exclude or disadvantage anyone.
- 4.4 All communications must be done in plain language, whatever the language it is communicated in, so that the essence of the communication is conveyed as clearly as possible without undue use of excessive technical, legal or other jargon.
- 4.5 It is recognised that the full and proper implementation of the working languages may need to be phased in over time.

### **5. Policy Provisions**

#### **5.1 Designated Official Working Languages**

5.1.1 In accordance with the latest available census **figures**, the official working languages for official communications for the municipality are –

- a) English
- b) Afrikaans
- c) Sesotho

5.1.2 The municipality will, however, at its cost, ensure that –

- a) Professional interpreting services are available in all the official working languages at official meetings such as council meetings, committee meetings, and ward/constituency committee meetings, where the participants indicated their preference for one of the official working languages with the Office of the Municipal Manager and/or chairperson of the proposed meeting(s) upon receipt of the agenda/notice of the meeting or at least 24 hours before the date and time of the meeting;
- b) Minutes of meetings of the Council and its committees are recorded in at least one other of the official working languages used at such meetings. A summarised translation into English will also be available.
- c) All by-laws, official reports, agendas and resolutions of the Municipal Council and its committees are available in the other entire official working languages.

## **5.2 Internal Communications: General**

5.2.1 Since English is the language most commonly understood amongst different language-speakers within the municipality, for the sake of financial and practical considerations, English is recommended as the working language in spoken intradepartmental and interdepartmental communications in the course of conducting official business where another official working language is not understood by all involved in the communication.

5.2.2 The municipality's policies, procedures, conditions of service, strategic circulars, important human resource information, health and safety information and other strategic documents must be made available in all the official working languages of the municipality.

## **5.3 Internal spoken communication**

5.3.1 Internal oral communications can be conducted in any of the three official working languages preferred by the conversing individuals provided that all involved

understand the language(s) being spoken. The municipality will, on request, provide an interpreter where required.

5.3.2 The oral component of official municipal programmes or campaigns directed at improving the wellbeing of employees or raising awareness should be conducted in all the official working languages.

5.3.3 In general, disciplinary hearings, job interviews and performance assessments in the municipality will be conducted in English, provided that translation and interpreting services are made available for those who cannot speak or understand English.

#### **5.4 Council and Council-Committee Meetings**

5.4.1 English will be the predominant language in which debates and related meetings and proceedings of the Municipal Council and its committees are conducted.

5.4.2 The municipality will, however, on at least 48 hours notice given to the chairperson of the Council or committee from the time that the agenda was sent, provide professional interpreting services for translation into to any of the other official working languages.

#### **5.5 Written Correspondence between Officials and Councillors**

5.5.1 As the language commonly understood within the municipality, English is the official working language of record for internal written communication between and within departments.

5.5.2 Councillors and Officials may, however, prepare their official written communications in any other of the official working languages, which can then be translated into English or any other of the official working languages better understood by the recipient of the communication.

#### **5.6 Training**

5.6.1 The medium of instruction for training will be English, unless the trainer/presenter is required to present in any other of the official working languages understood by all the participants.

- 5.6.2 The municipality will, on request of the participants, ensure the professional translation of internal training and course material into any other/all of the official languages.
- 5.6.3 Officials and Councilors should Endeavour to learn the entire official working languages. The municipality will organise training programmes and refresher courses to assist in the learning of the other languages, which should at a minimum include providing Officials and Councillors with basic conversational skills required in their interactions in the course of their duties with colleagues and the public in general – e.g. greetings, ‘how are you?’

## **5.7 External Communications: Written Communications**

- 5.7.1 Community-wide communications (e.g. official notices, tenders, forms) generated by the municipality and directed to the community, will be done in English and at least one other official working language common to the community. The municipality will, however, make available copies of all such communications in the other official working languages on request.
- 5.7.2 All official forms to be completed by the public must be made available in the entire official working languages.
- 5.7.3 Members of the public may use any of the official working languages in their dealings with the municipality.
- 5.7.4 The municipality will respond in the official working language in which the original communication was received.
- 5.7.5 If the original communication was not made in one of the official working languages, the municipality will respond in English if it cannot reasonably respond in the original language of the communication, unless the person initiating the communication indicates as his/her second language preference one of the other official working languages.

## **5.8 External Communication: Oral Communications**

- 5.8.1 The municipality will communicate with members of the public in the official working language preferred by the target audience, with the assistance of interpreters where necessary. The interpreter should ideally be an Official or Councilor, failing which the municipality will provide an external service provider.

- 5.8.2 The municipality will make available a help desk with Officials who are proficient in any one or more of the official working languages.

## **5.9 Telephone Exchange**

- 5.9.1 Recorded telephone services will be in all the official working languages and prompt customers according to their language preference.

## **6. Procedures**

- 6.1 The municipality must budget appropriately for the provision of language planning and training, language policy development and implementation, translation and interpreting services, language audits and the like in order to meet its obligations in terms of this policy.
- 6.2 The municipality will undertake regular internal and external language preference and proficiency audits with a view to determining the linguistic needs and capabilities of internal and external stakeholders, and update this policy accordingly.
- 6.3 The Council will establish an ad hoc Language Committee under the auspices of the Corporate Services Portfolio. The Committee must consist of Officials and Councils who among them together understand all the official working languages.
- 6.4 The Committee must, in consultation with relevant experts where necessary –
- 6.4.1 monitor the use of all the official working languages in the municipality;
  - 6.4.2 actively promote the principle of multilingualism;
  - 6.4.3 advise and make recommendations on any language matter to Council;
  - 6.4.4 conduct regular language surveys and audits to assess the appropriateness of the existing policy and practices of the municipality and make recommendations for improvements to the policy and practices where required;
  - 6.4.5 raise awareness of the policy to ensure compliance;
  - 6.4.6 raise awareness of the policy among Officials and of the role of PanSALB as the official watchdog and protector of their language rights;
  - 6.4.7 create a helpdesk at which all the official working languages can be spoken with the public;

6.4.8 develop and maintain a database of professional translating, interpreting, Sign Language and Braille services and facilities; and

6.4.9 Initiate studies and research directed at –

- a) Promoting respect for the official working languages;
- b) Promoting multilingualism within the municipality;
- c) Promoting and using the language resources of the municipality;
- d) Interact with other stakeholders on language-related issues.

6.5 The Committee will be responsible to Council for the implementation of this policy. The Committee will present actions plans to Council for approval, which addresses all relevant issues – e.g. costs, timing, deliverables, quality assessment, responsibilities; and deal with complaints regarding the official working languages.

6.6 Cognisance must be had of the provisions of this policy in the process of advertising, recruiting, selecting and appointing new staff.

6.7 The municipality must as far as reasonably possible provide multilingual liaison interpreters from among its own staff to, for example, assist illiterate staff in gaining access to municipal information.

6.8 A sentence must be included at the bottom of all official external communications stating that the document can be made available in any other of the official municipal languages.

## **7. Delegations**

Officials, implementing this policy, are required to make reference to the latest delegation framework and identify the appropriate delegations applicable to this policy, which may be subject to change from time to time

## **8. Annexures**

Copy of signed delegation (if applicable).