



Western Economic  
Diversification Canada

Diversification de l'économie  
de l'Ouest Canada

# WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

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# Introduction

## Message from WD's Official Languages Champion

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is a diverse and thriving department with energized employees who embrace Canada's two official languages. It is a privilege to be the Official Languages Champion in a department where so many colleagues are passionate about our rich bilingual heritage.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act in 2019, WD's Official Languages Committee received the prestigious Excellence and Leadership in Official Languages Award. WD was one of only 50 recipients across the federal system to be recognized. This an amazing achievement upon which to build, and build is what WD intends to do!

I am happy to share with you Western Economic Diversification's Official Languages Action Plan 2020-2023. The Plan sets out two priorities:

- First, we will continue to encourage a work environment that is respectful of both official languages and enables linguistic duality in the workplace. What's more, for those who are willing and motivated, we will support you to find ways of including English and French in both your professional and personal lives.
- Second, we will support the growth and wellbeing of Western Canada's official language minority communities (OLMCs) across WD's mandate, including in the programming initiatives we undertake. We will work closely with Francophone organizations on the ground, continually refining our processes, programs, and policies to ensure they are as linguistically inclusive as possible.

Canada's inclusiveness is key to its strength as a country. The capacity to live and grow in both official languages across the country, including across the West, is an important part of that strength. WD remains committed and excited to play a leadership role in promoting linguistic duality on the job and in our communities.

## Context

Western Economic Diversification (WD) is proud of its official languages involvement. WD recognizes the importance of linguistic duality and promotes equality of English and French within its organization, in its dealings with other government departments and in its delivery of services to Canadians.

The 2020-2023 Official Languages (OL) Action Plan is intended to further strengthen WD's commitment to implementing Parts IV, V, VI and VII of the Official Languages Act (OLA). It was developed to integrate official languages rights and obligations into WD's policies, programs, and services, and to support the achievement of results in these areas over the three years of the plan. The Action Plan provides a strategic framework that outlines WD's OL priorities as well as an operational framework that supports the achievement of strategic outcomes and legislative requirements.

The Action Plan is divided into two sections:

- The first sets out the department's OL priorities and outlines activities that, whenever possible, have measurable outcomes.
- The second identifies the actions that will be carried out in order to meet legislative requirements.

This plan will be reviewed periodically throughout its implementation and updated as progress is made and new information is put forward.

Reporting will be completed periodically to assess the achievement of the priorities outlined in this action plan.

### Did you know?

Over the years, Manitoba's Francophone population has been transformed into a dynamic, structured and prosperous community. Despite the difficulties it has experienced in its history, Manitoba's Francophone community has persevered and today totals approximately 110,000 Manitobans (Francophones and Francophiles). These Francophones live mainly in Winnipeg's Francophone neighbourhoods and in some 40 Francophone villages located primarily in the southern part of the province.

### Tenacity

That is the word that sums up the history of Manitoba's Francophone community and the people who have chosen to be a part of it. Otherwise, how can we explain that a modern and dynamic Francophone community still exists in Manitoba?

To fully understand Franco-Manitoban tenacity, we must remember the history of the Francophone community in Manitoba. French was the language of Canadian voyageurs who came from Lower Canada as early as the 18th century. It was then the language of the Métis, the children of these voyageurs who became "free men," and of their Indigenous spouses. French was the language of the Catholic religious men and women who worked in the Red River Colony and in Western Canada starting in 1818. French is still the language of French Canadians from Quebec and New England and of many immigrants who have come to us from various Francophone populations for a hundred years.

Francophone Métis, French Canadians and other Francophones share a common sense of belonging: that of being part of this country, a country where French language and culture are an integral part of the heritage. This sense of belonging has, for a long time, tempered reactions to the unconstitutional legislation passed by the Manitoba legislature in 1890. This sense of belonging, this well-established feeling of being at home in Manitoba despite all the difficulties, has fuelled Manitoba Francophones' normal and natural desire to improve their lot and that of their community.

Today, more than at any other time in their history, Francophones can flourish in French in Manitoba. With the official recognition they enjoy at the provincial and federal levels, these women and men have the economic, educational, social and community tools they need to ensure that the Francophone community has a prominent place in the province of Manitoba.

*Source: Société de la francophonie manitobaine*

# Official Languages Action Plan: Priorities

Priority 1: Foster engagement at all levels of the organization to create and support a workplace culture that is inclusive and respectful of linguistic duality

## Expected Results:

- Employees, managers and senior leaders support and encourage the use of both official languages in the workplace thereby creating a work culture that celebrates linguistic duality.
- Employees, managers and senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to official languages.

## Performance measures:

- Results on the Public Service Employee Survey questions related to Official Languages are maintained or improved for both Official Language groups.
- The number of founded Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OL) complaints received from the OCOL, relative to previous years and/or similar incidents are maintained or reduced.
- The number of internal complaints concerning OL is maintained or reduced.

### Did you know?

The era of the fur trade and its voyageurs led to the first French-speaking settlements in western Canada. These small outposts grew steadily but often retained their original names, a reminder of their French origins. French was the first European language spoken in the territory that later became the province of Alberta. It also became the trading language of Fort Edmonton, built in 1795 by the Hudson Bay Company. Although the massive influx of settlers led to the end of French's first-language status in Alberta, a tenacious French-speaking community set down roots and survived.

Today, Alberta is home to Canada's third largest minority francophone population after Ontario and New Brunswick. According to 2016 Census data, Alberta's Francophones (2% of Albertans) are among the fastest growing French-speaking populations in Canada. Although increasing in numbers, the francophone community is considered fragile since its members struggle to work and live in French and are thinly dispersed across the province. To support Alberta's francophone community, WD has funded various initiatives designed to enhance their vitality and assist in their economic development. Recent initiatives include business incubator services for francophone entrepreneurs, a francophone college and community radio station, and tourism circuits that provide a francophone experience.

*Sources: Encyclopedia of French Cultural Heritage in North America, Government of Alberta.*

## Activities

- Review, update and promote WD tools, resources and intranet content pertaining to official languages.
- Include material pertaining to official languages responsibilities in the welcoming and integrating of students and new employees.
- Promote OL partner resources, such as Council of ADM OL Champions' Best Practices Resources, OCOL's Active Offer Guide, etc.
- Manage and monitor official languages complaints.
- Analyse the results of the Public Service Employee Survey and take action as required.
- Evaluate the need for learning opportunities on topics pertaining to official languages rights and obligations and implement as required.
- Promote second language training available in-house and through the Canada School of Public Service.
- Monitor the 'expired/expiring/does not meet' results of second language evaluations and take action as required.
- Provide guidance and information to employees and managers in support of second language maintenance.
- Organize events to promote national initiatives such as the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie and Linguistic Duality Day.

### Priority 2: Support the official language minority communities (OLMCs) in western Canada through WD's suite of programs and services

#### Expected Results:

- OLMCs have access to, and their specific needs and priorities are taken into account in, WD's programs and services.

#### Performance measures:

- Consistency of WD's engagement with OLMCs to ensure that they are aware of, and have access to, WD's programs and services.
- Percentage of projects that were assessed using the OL lens, which WD officers identified as having an impact on OLMCs during the project assessment process.
- Examine seized and missed opportunities to support and assist OLMCs in their development for continuous improvement and training purposes.
- Number and dollar value of approved projects where projects have a Francophone component and/or adjustments were made to support and assist OLMCs.
- Examples of coordination and liaison with other federal institutions (including Regional Federal Councils, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Canadian Heritage and other government departments), and through partnerships (including the Committee of ADMs on Official Languages and the Section 41 network).

## Activities

- Consult and network with western OLMCs to assess their needs and priorities on an ongoing basis.
- **Undertake the following activities to better understand OLMCs**
  - Procure, disseminate and take into account a needs assessment study of OLMCs in the West
  - Feasibility study to define and describe Francophone businesses (in collaboration with Statistics Canada, ISED and the other RDAs)
  - Participate in the post-census survey of the vitality of OLMCs (lead by Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with Statistics Canada)
- Take positive measures<sup>1</sup> in implementing WD's O&M and G&C programs, including:
  - identifying projects that directly benefit Francophone communities in Western Canada, or
  - working with potential proponents to determine if a project could be adjusted to support and assist the development of OLMCs.
- Foster partnerships with regional and interdepartmental OL committees across the West and nationally.
- Proactively promote perspectives of the Western Canadian OLMCs in federal fora.
- Perform an OL impact assessment when WD makes a TB submission, which would trigger any one of the eight conditions listed in the OL Appendix (<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/treasury-board-submissions/official-languages-requirements-appendix.html>)
- Ensure that the recommendations made in the OL impact assessment of the TB submission are implemented at the time that WD develops the contribution agreement with the project proponent.

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<sup>1</sup> A positive measure is an action taken by a federal institution that has a real and positive effect on: a) the vitality of official language minority communities; b) progress towards the equal status of English and French in Canadian society; c) the future of linguistic duality in Canada. ([Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages](#))

# Official Languages Action Plan: Legislative Requirements

This section identifies the actions that will be taken to meet legislative requirements and to ensure that WD complies with the OLA.

## Part IV of the OLA: Communications with and services to the public

### Expected Results:

- The active offer<sup>2</sup>, and services of equal quality, are available to the public in both official languages.
- Tools are in place to support the delivery of services in both official languages.

### Performance measures:

- The number of founded complaints received from OCOL pertaining to Part IV of the OLA, relative to previous years are maintained or reduced.
- Results of annual active offer internal review remain consistent or show improvement.
- Public documents and documents related to providing services to the public are translated and available in both official languages in a timely way.
- WD respects the principle of substantive equality<sup>3</sup> in its obligations under Part IV (communications with and services to the public) and Part VII (enhancing the vitality of OLMCs).

### Did you know?

The Société de développement économique (SDE), WD's official partner for the support and economic development of minority communities in British Columbia, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2018, continues to place great value on diversity and inclusion in the implementation of their mandate. In their 2018-2019 annual report, SDE served over a thousand clients, the vast majority of whom were from outside that province and from outside Canada. In addition, 280 businesswomen were able to improve their skills through Femmes d'affaires en Mouvement (FAM), a comprehensive program of services for women, including mentoring. Young British Columbians, in addition to having the workshops offered on entrepreneurship, now have 11 modules to encourage financial literacy. Finally, to properly support immigrants, the SDE has set up several partnerships to develop, among other things, two virtual support tools to better meet immigrants' needs.

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<sup>2</sup> An active offer of service is an open invitation to the public to use one of our two official languages—English or French—when communicating with or receiving a service from the federal government.

<sup>3</sup> Substantive equality is achieved when one takes into account, where necessary, the differences in characteristics and circumstances of minority communities and provides services with distinct content or using a different method of delivery to ensure that the minority receives services of the same quality as the majority. **This approach is the norm in Canadian law.** (<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/values-ethics/official-languages/public-services/analytical-grid-substantive-equality.html>)



## Activities

- Make available tools and resources to help employees actively offer services in both official languages.
- Managers will ensure non-imperative appointments respect the Public Service Official Languages Exclusion Approval Order (PSOLEAO) **and** Public Service Official Languages Appointment Regulations (PSOLAR)
- Manage and monitor official languages complaints received from OCOL.
- Ensure WD's communications via social media or its external website are of high standard in both official languages.
- Undertake an internal review of WD's capacity to provide service in both official languages.

### Part V of the OLA: Language of Work

#### Expected outcomes:

- Employees in bilingual regions may work and be supervised in the official language of their choice.
- Employees receive internal services in the official language of their choice.

#### Performance measures:

- Results on the Public Service Employee Survey questions related to official languages are maintained or improved.
- Number of non-compliance incidents related to corporate communications are monitored and reduced.
- Information and documents related to internal services are readily available in both official languages.

## Activities

- Monitor internal communications for compliance with the OLA and take action as required.
- Ensure that staff have options for professional development and training in their official language of choice.
- Analyse the results of the Public Service Employee Survey, and identify and implement strategies to address any deficiencies.
- Support managers of employees in bilingual regions in their responsibility to offer performance feedback in the employee's language of choice.

## Part VI of the OLA: Participation of English- and French-speaking Canadians

### Expected Results:

- English- and French-speaking Canadians are represented equitably and have equal opportunities to obtain employment and advancement at WD.

### Performance measure:

- The composition of WD's workforce reflects the presence of both official language communities of Canada, taking into account the characteristics of WD as an institution (mandate, the public we serve and the location of WD offices).
- Number of targeted initiatives to reach and/or recruit English and French speaking Canadians.

### Activities

- Monitor the composition of WD's English- and French-speaking employees.
- Support Hiring Managers in strengthening workforce capacity to respond to future demands for francophone services in programming in western Canada.
- Employment opportunities (e.g., advertised processes) are available in both official languages simultaneously and are equally authoritative.
- Promote Federal Public Service jobs and recruitment programs to OLMC academic institutions and community organizations across the west at events such as:
  - Career fairs
  - Information sessions
- **Collaborate with post-secondary institutions and organizations, such as L'ACUFA (L'Association des Collèges et Universités de la francophonie canadienne), to encourage recruitment of French-speaking Canadians.**

## Part VII of the OLA: Advancement of English and French (section 41)

### Expected Results:

- Economic development of OLMCs in western Canada; and
- Promotion of linguistic duality as a competitive advantage in Canadian society and globally.

### Performance measures:

- Ongoing partnership-building with FEDOs to support the delivery of business services and community economic development initiatives in OLMCs.
- Number and value of projects approved for EDI funding as administered by the FEDO in SK.
- Ratio of leveraged funds through the EDI pan west funding.
- Number of WD projects and value of investments supporting OLMCs through general programming (i.e. through RIE, BSP, CEDD, etc.).
- Examples of projects that demonstrate the competitive advantage and positive impact of bilingualism on OLMCs.

### Did you know?

Despite a rich francophone and Métis presence prior to the founding of Saskatchewan in 1905, francophone rights to use French as a language of education for their children were severely limited and eventually abolished. Francophones created associations and organizations to support their struggle to maintain their language and culture, such as the newspaper *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* in 1910, the *Association catholique franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan* in 1912, and *Collège Mathieu*, a french-language college in Gravelbourg in 1918. In the 1960s, federal policies favourable to the French language, such as the *Official Languages Act*, prompted Saskatchewan to amend the *Education Act* to once again allow education in French. However, challenges still exist for Francophones in Saskatchewan due to the relatively small population scattered over a large territory, who by the way are called *Fransaskois*. Of the community organizations representing *Fransaskois*, the *Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan (CÉCS)* has carved out a special place for itself in the economic development of this community. A WD partner, the CÉCS continues to stimulate the creation, development and expansion of Francophone businesses in Saskatchewan from its five offices. In the fall of 2019, a collaboration with the *Société des Économusées* resulted in the opening of the first *Économusée* in Saskatchewan.

## Activities

- Continue to foster strong relationships with the FEDOs, including seizing opportunities to meet with them (individually or as a group) where possible.
- Encourage officers to continue pursuing and exploring potential projects that directly benefit OLMCs.
- Piloting a project from 2020-2023 that enables the FEDOs to administer the EDI program.
- Facilitate increased application of the OL Lens across WD programs, including through officer training, program guidance, and regular review of the tool.
- Undertake periodic review of progress on these programming efforts.
- Create and maintain an inventory of OL success stories.
- Renew G&C agreements with the FEDOs for 2022.
- Incorporate OL considerations into the development of IRIS.