



nelson mandela bay  
M U N I C I P A L I T Y

## **LANGUAGE POLICY (VERSION 2)**

## POLICY HISTORY

<b>TITLE OF POLICY</b>		Language Policy (Version 2)				
<b>POLICY OWNER</b>		Office of the Chief Operating Officer				
<b>POLICY CHAMPION</b>		Director: Communications Name: Sithembiso Soyaya Tel: 041 506 1560 E-mail: <a href="mailto:ssoyaya@mandelametro.gov.za">ssoyaya@mandelametro.gov.za</a>				
<b>DOCUMENT HISTORY:</b>						
<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Approving Authority</b>	<b>Adoption date</b>	<b>Resolution No.</b>	<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Review Initiation Date</b>
Language Policy (Version 2)	Adopted	Council	15 October 2024 – postponed from 10 October 2024	Item 13; Page 58	6/2/5/P	15 October 2027
Language Policy	Rescinded	Council	10 May 2007	Min No. 30/2007	6/2/5/P	

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. DEFINITIONS .....	1
2. PURPOSE .....	2
3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK .....	3
4. POLICY PRINCIPLES .....	5
5. POLICY OBJECTIVES .....	6
6. SCOPE OF APPLICATION .....	7
7. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION.....	7
7.1 External verbal communication .....	7
7.2 Application of external communication .....	7
7.3 Assistance for People with Disabilities (PWDs).....	8
8. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION .....	9
8.1 Internal verbal communication .....	9
8.2 Internal written communication.....	9
9. MUNICIPAL SIGNAGE .....	9
10. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....	10
11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES .....	10
11.1 Language Unit .....	10
11.2 Code of Conduct.....	11
11.3 Development and education .....	11
11.4 General telephonic communication.....	11
11.5 Financing .....	12
12. MONITORING AND EVALUATION .....	12
13. POLICY APPLICATION AND REVIEW .....	12

## 1. DEFINITIONS

In *the Policy*, unless the context indicates otherwise:

**“Council”** means the Council of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality.

**“Councillor”** means a member of the *Council* of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, and a person that in terms of Section 117 of the Municipal Finance Management Act is barred from serving on municipal tender committees.

**“functional multilingualism”** means selecting an appropriate language for communication purposes, with due respect to the requirements of the situation and the proficiency of the user (partners in the communication context). This means that not all *official languages* need to be used in equal measure for all domains and at all levels of usage, so that certain functions may be performed only in English, others only in isiXhosa, others in all three languages, etc.

**“multilingual”** means

- a) the use of more than one language; or
- b) the ability to use more than one language.

**“Municipality”** means the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, a Category A Municipality established in terms of Part 2 of Schedule 1 of Notice 85 in the Eastern Cape Provincial Gazette No. 654 on 27 September 2000, promulgated in terms of Section 12(1) of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998.

**“municipal official”** as defined in the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 means:

- a) an employee of the Municipality or its Municipal Entity;
- b) a person seconded to the Municipality or its Municipal Entity to work as a member of the staff of the Municipality or a Municipal Entity; or

- c) a person contracted by the Municipality or its Municipal Entity to work as a member of the staff of the Municipality or a Municipal Entity otherwise than as an employee.

**“official language”** means any one of the languages recognised as a national language by the Constitution and selected for formal use by the *Municipality*. In the context of the *Municipality* the official languages are English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa.

**“the Policy”** means the Language Policy (Version 2) of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality.

## **2. PURPOSE**

2.1 The recognition of the *multilingual* nature of South African society by the Constitution of this country necessitates the creation of tools of implementation in the form of appropriate language policies. Such language policies are designed to correct the universal tendency to monolingualism in *multilingual* societies which disempowers non-mother-tongue speakers of the dominant language, to the detriment of both their rights as citizens and in communicative equity in exercising these rights. It is understood, as reflected by the spirit as well as the letter of the Constitution, that the recognition of multilingualism will promote human rights, facilitate effective administration and contribute to the development of our country's economy, education and cultural diversity as a national resource.

2.2 *The Policy* is built on the framework provided by Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), the Use of Official Languages Act 12 of 2012, as well as a commitment by the *Municipality* to practice multilingualism in operations, its training programmes, service delivery and employment practices.

- 2.3 The *Policy* therefore seeks:
- a) To promote the fair and inclusive utilisation of South African *official languages* in the *Municipality*;
  - b) To eliminate language barriers within the community, thereby facilitating equal access to municipal services and information by all residents of the *Municipality*;
  - c) To cultivate respect for and to protect the language rights of the residents of the *Municipality*;
  - d) To promote and support multilingualism within the *Municipality*.

### 3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

*The Policy* is informed by the following regulatory framework:

#### 3.1 **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996**

3.1.1 Section 6 of the Constitution states, amongst others,

- a) That due to the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages, the State must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages;
- b) That National and provincial governments must use at least two *official languages* subject to the considerations of usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the needs and preferences of the public as a whole;
- c) That municipalities must take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents.

3.1.2 Section 9 (3) states that citizens are protected against unfair discrimination on the grounds of, amongst others, language.

3.2 **Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998**

3.2.1 These statutes prohibit discrimination in the workplace on the basis of, among others, language.

3.3 **Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000**

3.3.1 This legislation sets the foundation for the establishment of municipal systems of administration and the various platforms for public participation which include ward committees. Without a responsive and equitable language policy, municipal administration would thus be discriminatory and promote inequality on the basis of language, whilst public participation would also be hampered.

3.4 **National Language Policy Framework of 2003**

3.4.1 This policy framework provides guidelines for the upholding of the Constitutional principles and further compels the utilisation of the indigenous languages as *official languages* to promote multilingualism, national unity, social justice, the principle of equal access to public services, and respect for language rights.

3.5 **Language Policy of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)**

3.5.1 The *Municipality* is committed to aligning its practices with this policy, particularly in its participation in programmes and projects under the purview of the GCIS.

3.6 **Pan South African Language Board Act 59 of 1995, as amended**

3.6.1 The Pan South African Language Board (hereinafter referred to as “PanSALB”), established by the PanSALB Act 59 of 1995 (amended by Act 10 of 1999) in terms of Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, seeks to develop and promote equitable use of all *official languages* of the Republic.

### 3.7 **Use of Official Languages Act 12 of 2012**

3.7.1 The Act provides for the regulation and monitoring of the use of *official languages* by national government for government purposes, to require the adoption of a language policy by a national department, national public entity and national public enterprise.

## 4. **POLICY PRINCIPLES**

4.1 **Batho Pele Principles:** The Batho Pele Principles, coupled with our commitment to a comprehensive language policy, provide a framework for the transformation of public service delivery. This entails the reorientation of government institutions to meet the needs of ALL citizens, ensuring inclusivity and effective communication.

### 4.2 **Language Policy Principles:**

- a) Capacity Development: Empowering citizens of the *Municipality* to contribute effectively to local government policy formulation and debates.
- b) Community-Centric Approach: Addressing and meeting the language needs, preferences, and interests of the community.
- c) Democracy: Facilitating language use to uphold the democratic rights of citizens to participate in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.
- d) Good governance: Utilising language to ensure transparent, accountable, and responsive management that meets residents' needs.
- e) Inclusivity: Ensuring the accommodation of previously marginalised designated groups.
- f) Language equity: Ensuring, to the fullest extent possible, equal treatment of isiXhosa, English, and Afrikaans.
- g) Language rights: Upholding and fostering respect for the constitutional language rights of all citizens.
- h) Monitoring, evaluation and revision: Regularly assessing the Policy and implementing changes as necessary for its effectiveness.

- i) Multilingualism: Actively encouraging and promoting the use of the aforementioned languages.
- j) Non-discrimination: Preventing language-based exploitation, domination, and discrimination.
- k) Partnerships: Collaborating with public, private, educational, and other institutions to advance multilingualism.
- l) Redress: Addressing the historical marginalisation of isiXhosa as an *official language* within the *Municipality's* jurisdiction.

## 5. POLICY OBJECTIVES

5.1 The objectives of *the Policy* are:

- a) To translate the constitutional provisions into a manageable and efficient set of measures;
- b) To propose structures for the implementation, monitoring and assessment of the Language Policy.
- c) To promote the equitable use of the *official languages* of the *Municipality* and prevent discrimination on linguistic grounds;
- d) To support, develop and sustain the practice of *multilingual* communication between the *Municipality* and its residents;
- e) To redress the previous marginalisation of isiXhosa as *official language* of the *Municipality*;
- f) To protect language diversity and promote knowledge of and respect for persons who use other languages; and
- g) To promote good language management for cost-effective and efficient public service administration in accommodating the needs of the residents.
- h) To encourage broader societal involvement in Municipality programs and discussions, mitigating assumptions favouring English as the primary language of discourse.

## **6. SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

6.1 *The Policy* is designed to be inclusive and applies comprehensively to all individuals within the municipal framework, including both *municipal officials* and political leaders. It mandates that these key stakeholders engage in effective and respectful communication that accommodates the linguistic diversity of our community.

6.2 By embodying the principles of the language policy, *municipal officials* and political leaders play a crucial role in promoting unity, transparency, and equitable service delivery for the benefit of all citizens.

## **7. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

### **7.1 External verbal communication**

7.1.1 During verbal communication with the public, efforts will be made to accommodate the language preference of residents. If not feasible, provisions for an interpreter must be made to accommodate the public.

### **7.2 Application of external communication**

7.2.1 Municipal officials and councillors, where applicable, are encouraged to establish the language preference of a member of the public at initial contact and honour such preference, providing an interpreter if necessary. This will ensure optimal comprehension by all.

7.2.2 All municipal legislation should be available in all three *official languages*.

7.2.3 Written communication to the public should accommodate the dominant languages of the community.

7.2.4 Written communication such as press releases, information brochures, advertisements, and announcements, should be made available in all three languages.

- 7.2.5 When reaching out to the community, members of the public should be requested to indicate their language preference for future reference.
- 7.2.6 Written communication to individual members of the public should be in the preferred language of such members.
- 7.2.7 Texts used on *the Municipality's* official website should be in the languages of all intended readers.

### 7.3 **Assistance for People with Disabilities (PWDs)**

- 7.3.1 The *Municipality* will ensure effective communication with PWDs by implementing measures such as:
  - a) Accommodating people with physical disabilities through accessible information in localities, such as lowered counters and noticeboards for wheelchair users.
  - b) Providing information for people with vision disabilities in formats like Braille, raised letters, large print, audio recordings, or dial-in telephone services.
  - c) Offering visual information, including sign language, for people with hearing disabilities.
  - d) Providing alternative communication media, such as writing, for people with speech disabilities.
  - e) Offering essential information in non-complex language for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
  - f) Providing sign language where functionally viable.

## **8. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

### **8.1 Internal verbal communication**

8.1.1 In all internal communication situations within the *Municipality*, any of the designated *official languages* recognised by the *Municipality*, adhering to the principle of *functional multilingualism* will be applied.

8.1.2 In verbal communication between *municipal officials* and councillors, *functional multilingualism* can be promoted by the practice of nonconverging discourse (where one speaks his/her own language and understands that of the other) provided that both parties understand the languages used.

8.1.3 Sign language must be used where functionally viable.

### **8.2 Internal written communication**

8.2.1 The objective of internal written communication is to ensure comprehension by both present and future readers.

8.2.2 English will be the language used for macro-organisational documents such as, but not limited to, agendas, minutes, notices, and memoranda.

8.2.3 Official verbatim records of *Council* debates and other meetings will be kept in the language in which they took place.

8.2.4 At the micro-organisational level, the principle of *functional multilingualism* must be applied, ensuring the language used is best understood by all participants.

## **9. MUNICIPAL SIGNAGE**

9.1 The *official languages* will be used to generically identify offices and facilities.

9.2 In deciding on the language used for the generic component of names of buildings, streets and other entities, the criterion of functionality must be

applied. The principle of multilingualism could be exercised by alternating the language in cases where multiple signs for the same entity are required.

## **10. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

10.1 The *Municipality* will:

- a) Support the development of educational and training programmes which will enhance multilingualism within the municipal administration and the *Municipality* as a whole.
- b) Support cultural development by inter alia (i) promoting the provision of books to public libraries in all three languages, and (ii) encouraging community theatre through active aid to local performances in all three languages.

## **11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

### **11.1 Language Unit**

11.1.1 The *Municipality's* Language Unit, within the Communications Sub-Directorate, was established to provide translation, editing and proofreading services.

11.1.2 It will collaborate with other linguistic organisations to contribute to the development and promotion of previously marginalised languages.

11.1.3 The Language Unit will be responsible:

11.1.3.1 for conducting, implementing and enforcing the *Municipality's* language policy;

11.1.3.2 for providing advice on language related issues;

11.1.3.3 for the provision of a professional and specialised translation, editing and proofreading service to the administration of the *Municipality*;

11.1.3.4 for encouraging the use of simple, accurate and understandable grammar in all official documents.

- 11.1.4 The Language Unit will work closely with the Pan South African Language Board, the National Language Service and other relevant bodies with a specific focus on terminological development and language norms regarding the *official languages* of the *Municipality*.
- 11.2 **Code of Conduct**
- 11.2.1 *Councillors* and *municipal officials* should be sensitive towards the value of multilingualism to build social cohesion, for the enhancement of economic development and the consolidation of democratic government through a respect for cultural diversity.
- 11.2.2 All councillors and *municipal officials* should accommodate the preferred language use of other councillors and officials with the necessary courtesy.
- 11.3 **Development and education**
- 11.3.1 *Councillors* and *municipal officials* should be encouraged to learn the three *official languages* used within the *Municipality*, and the necessary training must be provided to assist with the development of their language skills.
- 11.3.2 Directorates should be actively involved in the promotion of multilingualism in an equitable manner, as well as the identification of the required language skills to deliver an efficient communication service to its residents.
- 11.4 **General telephonic communication**
- 11.4.1 The general telephone reception and all *Municipality* call centres at all administrative municipal buildings, customer service centres and within all directorates should accommodate all customers in all three *official languages* used within the *Municipality*.
- 11.4.2 A recorded service should be available in all three *official languages* prompting customers according to their language preference.

## 11.5 **Financing**

11.5.1 Directorates should make provision for language training, language policy implementation and language resources in their budgets to meet the obligations outlined in this policy.

## 12. **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

12.1 Reports on the implementation of the policy will be submitted to Council structures and the Pan South African Language Board on an annual basis.

12.2 Furthermore, monitoring responsibilities will include:

- a) Oversight of the usage of isiXhosa, English, Afrikaans, and sign language within the *Council*.
- b) Active promotion of the principle of multilingualism.

## 13. **POLICY APPLICATION AND REVIEW**

13.1 This policy will be called the Language Policy (Version 2) and will be implemented from the first day of the month after adoption.

13.2 *The Policy* review will be initiated at the end of the third year following its adoption anniversary.

13.3 This policy will supersede any language policies previously adopted by *Council*.