



LANGUAGE POLICY

POLICY HISTORY

TITLE OF POLICY		Language Policy					
POLICY OWNER		Corporate Services Directorate					
POLICY CHAMPION		Name: Marthie Nel Tel: 041 506 1537 E-mail: mnel@mandelametro.gov.za					
DOCUMENT HISTORY:							
Policy Title	Status <small>(current, revised, no change, redundant)</small>	Approving Authority	Decision date	Resolution No.	Ref No.	Doc No.	Pending date for next review
Language Policy	Current	Council	10 May 2007	Min No. 30/2007	6/2/5/P		

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Glossary of terms.....	1
2. Introduction.....	2
3. Legislative context.....	4
4. Language profile and preferences of citizens.....	6
5. Policy goals.....	7
6. Language policy.....	9
7. Implementation.....	13
8. Policy monitoring.....	14
9. Cost-effective language policy development.....	14
References.....	15

1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

"Council" means the Council of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

"Functional multilingualism" means selecting an appropriate language for communication purposes, with due respect to the requirements of the situation and the proficiency of the interlocutors (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.

"NMBM" 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

"Official language" means any one of the languages recognised as such by the Constitution and selected for official use by the Municipality.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Preface

2.1.1 It is acknowledged that the *official language* dispensation inherited by the democratic South Africa led to educational, economic, political and social inequality, marginalisation and discrimination, which need to be redressed through a process of affirmative action.

2.1.2 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 mono-lingualism 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.

2.1.3 The Language Policy of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (*NMBM*) is built on the framework provided by Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996)) the Draft Eastern Cape language policy (compiled by the Provincial Language Committee in 1999) and the South African Languages Bill (2003), as well as a commitment by the *NMBM* to practice multilingualism in its training programmes, service delivery and employment practices.

2.1.4 Although it is recognised that proficiency in English provides access to services, job opportunities and education, a policy of monolingualism, which does not acknowledge various levels of, and also a lack of, proficiency in English, would run counter to the democratic principle of access to economic and political participation, communication and services to all sectors of the community. The exclusive use of a single language would in particular deny:

- a) the right of South African citizens to access services through the *official language* they know best as their first language;
- b) the effective implementation of the principle of Batho Pele in service delivery; and
- c) the stated objective in Section 6 of the Constitution to promote the use and maintenance of the indigenous languages.

2.1.5 A guiding principle in designing the language policy of the *NMBM* is tolerance with regard to the use of all *official languages* spoken generally in the Municipality. In line with this principle, the *NMBM* will also attempt to accommodate, where feasible, the use of other languages of South Africa and the world to enhance communication with business investors and visitors and promote tourism to the region.

2.2 **Values**

2.2.1 The Language Policy is based on the following principles:

- a) **Language rights:** to foster respect for the constitutional language rights of citizens
- b) **Language equity:** to ensure as far as possible the equal treatment of isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans
- c) **Multilingualism:** to promote the use of the above languages
- d) **Development:** to develop the capacity of the citizens of the Municipality to contribute to local government policy formulation and debates

- e) **Redress:** to redress the status of especially isiXhosa as previously marginalised *official language* in the *NMBM* area of jurisdiction
- f) **Non-discrimination:** to prevent the use of language for the purposes of exploitation, domination and discrimination
- g) **People-centredness:** to address the language needs, preferences and interests of the community
- h) **Partnerships:** to collaborate with public, private, educational and other institutions to promote multilingualism
- i) **Democracy:** to enhance the use of language in trying to uphold the democratic rights of citizens to participate in the formulation, implementation and assessment of the Policy
- j) **Good governance:** to harness language in ensuring transparent, accountable management that is responsive to the needs of the residents
- k) **Monitoring, evaluation and revision:** to regularly assess the Language Policy and effect changes, when required

3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The *NMBM* language policy is informed by the following legislative and policy framework imperatives:

3.1 The Constitution

3.1.1 Section 6 of the Constitution states, amongst others, that;

- a) because of 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) 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) 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 **National Language Policy Framework of 2003**

3.2.1 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.

3.3 **Local Government**

3.3.1 **Local Government Act: Municipal Systems, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000)**

3.3.1.1 This legislation sets the foundation for the establishment of municipal systems of administration and also 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.

3.3.2 **Vision**

3.3.2.1 The Language Policy is in line with the Municipality's Vision, as outlined in the Integrated Development Plan: *"A globally competitive city that works together with the people"*.

3.4 **Batho Pele White Paper, Notice 1459 of 1997**

3.4.1 The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, Notice 1459 of 1997 (Batho Pele White Paper) provides a policy framework for the transformation of public service delivery and for the reorientation of government institutions to meet the needs of ALL citizens. The policy framework also encourages the public to participate in policy making. Thus language becomes an important tool to either enhance/promote or as an obstacle to people's participation in policy making.

3.5 **Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997, and Employment Equity Act, 1998**

3.5.1 These acts prohibit discrimination in the workplace on the basis of, among others, language.

4. **LANGUAGE PROFILE AND PREFERENCES OF CITIZENS**

4.1 The 2001 National Census reveals the following language distribution within the Nelson Mandela Municipality according to home language:

- a) Afrikaans - 29,7
- b) IsiXhosa - 57,3%
- c) English - 12,1%
- d) Other - 0,9%

4.2 A sample survey was conducted during November 2004 in a randomly selected number of residential areas of the Municipality with a view, inter alia, to determine the attitude of residents regarding the desirability of a language policy and their language preferences in communicating with the *NMBM*. Informative differences were apparent from a comparison between the three main language groups.

4.3 In favour of a language policy for the Municipality:

- a) Of all IsiXhosa respondents: 75%
- b) Of all Afrikaans respondents: 50%
- c) Of all English respondents: 72%

4.4 In line with the National Census figures, a minor number of Sotho, Tswana and isiZulu speakers responded, of whom the majority also indicated approval of such a policy. On average, more than 80% of all respondents preferred their home language in speaking with officials, while more than 70% indicated preference for their home language to be used in letters and documents from the *NMBM*.

5. **POLICY GOALS**

5.1 The language policy guidelines provided by the legislation will be utilised to create an implementation tool which, in addition to giving effect to the relevant principles, will contribute to resolving the following language-related problems;

- a) The educational underdevelopment of many South Africans;
- b) Non-competitive performance in the workplace, which is partly due to inadequate educational development as a result of the necessity of using a language which has not been mastered by the learner;
- c) Inadequate societal and community participation in the *NMBM*'s programmes and debates, partly due to the fact that the main language of discourse is automatically assumed to be English.

5.2 Language plays a fundamental role in each of these domains, and it is essential to design policies and strategies to ensure that language is a facilitator rather than an obstacle in addressing the problems encountered. Language planning must therefore be directed at creating equitable conditions for speakers of all *official languages* used in the Municipality.

5.3 **General goals**

5.3.1 In order to actualise the goals and mission as stated above, the following general goals should be regarded as prerequisites for the formation of the Language Policy:

- a) **to translate** the constitutional provisions into a manageable and efficient set of measures; and
- b) **to propose** structures for the implementation, monitoring and assessment of the Language Policy.

5.4 **Specific goals**

5.4.1 In recognition of language diversity as a developmental resource and in order to give effect to the constitutional language provisions and promote the *official languages* of the Municipality, the Language Policy is designed:

- a) **to promote** the equitable use of the *official languages* of the Municipality and prevent discrimination on linguistic grounds;
- b) **to support, develop and sustain** the practice of *multilingual* communication between the Municipality and the residents;
- c) **to redress** the previous marginalisation of isiXhosa as *official language* of the Municipality;
- d) **to protect** language diversity and promote knowledge of and respect for persons who use other languages; and
- e) **to promote** good language management for cost-effective and efficient public service administration in accommodating the needs of the residents.

5.5 **Language-specific goals**

5.5.1 In addressing the problems identified above and ensuring the most equitable language dispensation, the language policy for the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality seeks to achieve the following language-specific goals:

- a) Developing IsiXhosa for use as an effective instrument in promoting the principle of Batho Pele in service delivery and for higher functions within the community;
- b) Promoting its standardisation and lexicographical expansion and increasing the knowledge of IsiXhosa as a second language, particularly amongst non-IsiXhosa-speaking municipal employees;
- c) Allowing Afrikaans, which has lost many of its functional roles in public life, to be utilised for those functions by all speakers who wish to do so; and
- d) Redefining the public role of English.

6. LANGUAGE POLICY

6.1 Official languages of the NMBM

6.1.1 The *official languages* of the *NMBM* shall be IsiXhosa, Afrikaans and English.

6.2 Language use for communication

6.2.1 Internal oral communication

6.2.1.1 Any of the languages accepted as official by the *NMBM* may be used. However, the principle of *functional multilingualism* shall apply in all situations.

6.2.1.2 Practical implications

- a) Should a speaker addressing a group prefer to speak in a language not fully understood by all present, a summary or translation in a language understood by those affected must be available on request.
- b) In verbal communication between Metro employees 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.

6.2.2 **External oral communication**

6.2.2.1 In verbal communication with the public, attempts should be made to accommodate the language preference of the citizen.

6.2.2.2 Practical implications:

- a) Employees of the *NMBM* should establish the language preference of a member of public at initial contact and honour such preference inasmuch as it is feasible.

6.2.3 **Internal written communication**

6.2.3.1 The objective is comprehension by present and future readers.

6.2.3.2 Practical implications

- a) At macro-organisational level, English shall be used for agendas, minutes, notices and memoranda.
- b) Discussion documents not submitted in English shall be accompanied by an English summary.
- c) Official verbatim records of *Council* debates and other meetings shall be kept in the language in which they took place.
- d) For micro-organisational purposes, the principle of *functional multilingualism* should be applied, so that the language best understood by all participants is selected.

6.2.4 **External written communication**

6.2.4.1 The objective is optimal comprehension by all citizens.

6.2.4.2 Practical implications for external written communication

- a) All municipal legislation must be made available in at least two, and preferably all three, *official languages*.
- b) Official annual reports must be made available in the three *official languages*.
- c) In written communication to the public, the preferred languages of the community must be accommodated.
- d) Written communication, e.g. press releases, information brochures, advertisements, announcements, etc., to the public at large must be issued in all three languages.
- e) In reaching out to the community, any member of the public should be requested to indicate a language preference for future reference.
- f) Written communication to individual members of the public must be in the preferred language of such members.
- g) Texts used on the Municipality's official website must be in the languages of all intended readers.

6.3 **Municipal signage**

6.3.1 The *official languages* shall be used to generically identify offices and facilities.

6.3.2 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.

6.4 **Labour relations**

6.4.1 The principle of *functional multilingualism* and recognition of the language rights of the employee must be maintained in respect of service contracts,

letters of appointment, notifications, explanatory documents (e.g. with reference to pension benefits).

6.5 **Assistance for People With Disabilities (PWDs)**

6.5.1 The *NMBM* shall ensure effective communication with PWDs in dealing with members of the community. To achieve this objective, the following measures, inter alia, need to be implemented:

- a) People with physical disabilities shall be accommodated through the provision of information in localities where they can read or hear it, e.g. by lowering counters and notice-boards for people using wheelchairs.
- b) The Municipality shall strive to provide for people with vision disabilities information in Braille, raised letters, large print, audio-cassettes or other audible medium, such as a dial-in telephone service.
- c) The Municipality shall strive to provide for people with hearing disabilities visual information, including sign language.
- d) The Municipality shall strive to provide for people with speech disabilities alternative media of communication, e.g. by allowing them to use writing to communicate with municipal officials.
- e) People with intellectual disabilities shall be provided with essential information in non-complex language.

6.6 **Education, training and capacity building**

6.6.1 The *NMBM* shall:

- 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 (a) promoting the provision of books to public libraries in all three languages, and (b) encouraging

community theatre through active aid to local performances in all three languages.

6.7 **Right to recourse**

6.7.1 The Municipality shall delegate an official(s) to deal with all complaints concerning the Language Policy.

6.7.2 Disciplinary action may be instituted by the Municipality on receipt of a formal grievance concerning an alleged infringement of the Language Policy. An infringement of the Policy, committed with the intention to unfairly discriminate because of language usage, may be considered as a serious offence, a gross violation of fundamental rights and detrimental to the status of the *NMBM*.

7. **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Municipality will adopt a phased approach to the implementation of the Language Policy.

7.1 **Structures**

7.1.1 **Municipal Language Subcommittee**

7.1.1.1 A Municipal Language Subcommittee shall be established to:

- a) Advise *Council* with regard to language usage and preferences of the residents
- b) Monitor the use of isixhosa, English and Afrikaans in the *Council* and actively promote the principle of multilingualism
- c) Monitor the gradual phasing in of the Language Policy
- d) Advise and make recommendations on any language matter.

7.1.2 Composition of Municipal Language Subcommittee

7.1.2.1 The Municipal Language Subcommittee will consist of -

- a) The Speaker
- b) The Chairperson of the Human Resources and Corporate Administration Committee
- c) The Chairperson of the Recreational and Cultural Services Committee
- d) A technical team from affected directorates.

8. POLICY MONITORING

8.1 The Municipal Language Subcommittee is tasked with the compilation of a Code of Conduct that will be in line with the Code of Conduct for municipal officials and for Councillors. This code of conduct will be based on the approved Language Policy, as well as with a set of criteria according to which the implementation of the Policy will be assessed.

9. COST-EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

9.1 The Municipality will ensure the optimum use of the linguistic resources that already exist.

REFERENCES

In compiling this Draft Language Policy, the following references were consulted:

City of Cape Town Language Policy Implementation Report.

Implementation Plan: National Language Policy Framework, Final Draft 10 April 2003.

Language Policy of the Gauteng Provincial Government.

South African Languages Bill: Revised final draft 4 April 2003.

Webb, V.N. 2002. Language policy development in South Africa. Special invitation of the Linguapax Institute, Barcelona, Spain, as part of their *World Congress on Language Policies* in Barcelona. <http://www.iinquapax.org/congres/indexanq.html>

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Language Policy.

Report of the Census Sub-Committee to the South African Statistics Council on Census 2001, accessible at <http://www.statssa.gov.za/extract.htm>