

LETSEMENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY LANGUAGE POLICY(DRAFT)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 MANDATE

The Letsemeng Local Municipality Language policy is derived and informed by:

1.1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), Chapter 1, section 6, and the following relevant constitutional provisions of the Bill of Rights, Chapter 2:

- Equality and language (section 9(3))
- Language and Culture (section 30)
- Cultural, religious and linguistic communities (section 31(1))

1.1.2 The Pan South African Language Board Act, 1995 (Act No. 59 of 1995)

1.1.3 The National Language Policy Framework (NLPF) and Implementation Plan, 2003

1.1.4 The Batho Pele White Paper, October 1997

1.1.5 Standard Rules and Orders of the Free State Province as adopted by the municipality.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Provincial circumstances have been taken into account in formulating the Letsemeng Local Municipality Language Policy. According to the latest available census figures (2001), in the Free State Sesotho is the language used by the majority of the Free State population (64% or 1 742 939 mother-tongue speakers), followed by Afrikaans (12% or 323 082 mother-tongue speakers), IsiXhosa (9 % or 246 192 mother-tongue speakers), Setswana (7 % or 185 389 mother-tongue speakers) and IsiZulu (5 % or 138 091 mother-tongue speakers). English (1,3% or 31 246 mother-tongue speakers), although used by very few people in the province as mother-tongue, is the language used by speakers whose mother tongue is different. It is a language that enables people from different societies and ethnic groups to communicate effectively, thus empowering people to operate in a global society. The value of being proficient in English should therefore not be underestimated, provided that its use does not hinder the use and development of other indigenous languages. English has also become established as the language of record of the Provincial Government, for practical and functional communication reasons. In the translation industry it serves as the source language from which documents are translated into the target languages, i.e. other official languages.

1.2.2 Under the previous apartheid government Afrikaans and English were the official languages of South Africa. When the democratically elected government came into power, provision was made for 11 official languages with the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, giving recognition to all our indigenous languages. Due to the non-use of the African languages in an official context before 1994 in South Africa, vast linguistic imbalances resulted. Since then government has been mandated to incorporate African languages as official languages

alongside Afrikaans and English in the activities of State and uplift their status in all respects. Provinces adapted to this new direction by introducing the dominant languages in their area as official languages, usually three or four at the most. As a result, the Letsemeng Local Municipality also conforms to this approach that the most dominant language within its area be made an official language alongside English and Afrikaans.

1.2.3 In 1994 Sesotho was added to Afrikaans and English as official Languages at provincial government level in the Free State.

Though not formally adopted by policy or legislation, these three languages became established as the Free State official languages through their use in government communication. They have enjoyed special status in both the Free State Provincial Legislature and the Free State Provincial Government since 1994.

1.2.4 The two other official languages used in the Free State Province by a significant number of speakers, namely Setswana and IsiZulu, are concentrated in some Free State regions as major languages. In such cases, municipalities will have to take this into account. Letsemeng Local Municipality, whose language policies are to be aligned to the provincial language policy, is expected to base its choice of designated official languages on local circumstances such as the language distribution and established custom in their areas of jurisdiction and on practical considerations.

1.2.5 Sesotho, as the language of the majority of the Free State population, deserves special attention. Sufficient resources should be allocated for Sesotho terminology development and Sesotho literature promotion and production (Extract from the FSPG Final Draft Language Policy).

2. AIMS

The aims of Letsemeng Local Municipality Language Policy are:

- 2.1 To promote the equitable use of the designated official languages of the Letsemeng Local Municipality.
- 2.2 To facilitate equitable access to Local government services, knowledge and information for all people of Letsemeng in the spirit of Batho Pele
- 2.3 To foster respect for and protect the language rights of the people of Letsemeng.
- 2.4 To promote and encourage multilingualism in the Letsemeng area.
- 2.5 To encourage the learning of the provincial languages within our area.
- 2.6 To promote collaboration with all stakeholders to avoid duplication of efforts and to coordinate activities.

3. USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN LETSEMENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Sesotho, Afrikaans, and English are the designated official languages of Letsemeng Local Municipality.

Official languages will be used as follows:

3.1 Internal Oral Communication

- 3.1.1 For meetings, discussions and consultations any of the designated official languages that are understood and agreed to by all participants may be used, provided that interpreting is done by a person who is conversant in that other language is used if necessary, and that the minutes of meetings or proceedings are recorded in English for record purposes.

3.1.2 Training courses and information sessions for officials must be conducted in the designated Letsemeng Local Municipality official language suited to the target group, with the assistance of presenter who speaks the particular language.

3.2 Internal Written Communication

3.2.1 English, for purposes of mutual understanding, is the language of record for internal written communication, between and within organs of state.

3.2.2 However, every official must be allowed to use Sesotho, Afrikaans, or English when drafting official written communication.

3.2.4 Furthermore every official will be allowed to request the translation or explanation of any official written communication generated by the Letsemeng Local Municipality into Sesotho, Afrikaans, or English.

3.3 External Oral Communication and specifically structures providing services directly to the public.

3.3.1 All official oral communication by the Letsemeng Local Municipality with the public must be conducted in the designated official language/languages most suited to the target audience, with the assistance, if necessary, of officials proficient in the language.

3.3.2 In centres and structures rendering services directly to the public, officials who are mother-tongue speakers of the Letsemeng official languages (including SA Sign Language if applicable) used by a significant number of speakers in the particular region or service area should be appointed.

3.3.3 To enable Letsemeng Local Municipality to facilitate implementation of the directives of the Batho Pele White Paper and ensure that its customers are helped and receive information in a language they understand, either by telephone or in person, and are able to submit complaints about and proposals for improving service delivery, the municipality will establish information/customer care desk at its head offices, staffed with official(s) who are mother-tongue speakers of the languages from each of the following categories :

- Sotho group (Sesotho, Setswana)
- Afrikaans
- English
- Nguni group (IsiXhosa, IsiZulu)

3.3.4 Political and public functionaries who address the public, consult them or converse with them during visits, meetings and imbizo's must be accompanied by interpreters of these official languages, if applicable, that are suited for the particular area or region. Every effort must be made to involve all language communities in the region in such interaction.

3.3.5 Public campaigns, road shows, workshops and conferences must be conducted in all three designated official languages.

3.4 External Written Communication with the Public

3.4.1 In compliance with the Batho Pele White Paper, written communication with the public must be in plain, easy-to-understand, customer-friendly language.

3.4.2 Any response by the government to written correspondence from a member or members of the public must be in the SA official language used by the correspondent.

3.4.2 Official government publications specified below must be published in at least two designated official languages, namely its language of record (English) and on a rotational basis, one of the other three languages: Provided that versions in the other two designated official languages are made available within reasonable time in electronic format, to be supplied on request to the public. Where applicable, a footnote stating that these are available on request in the other designated official languages must appear on the documents.

3.4.3 The municipality must file its documents in the archive so that the documents can be supplied electronically to the point of request, if reasonable. The public must be able to request the versions in their designated. The official documents must also be kept in the archive.

3.4.4 The following documents must be published / be available / be displayed simultaneously in all three designated official languages:

- Official notices for general public information
- Information documents informing the public about the services rendered by municipality
- All official forms to be completed by the public
- Pamphlets and documents containing important, crucial and essential information that all residents of the municipality should be aware of for the sake of their wellbeing, protection, health or good order.
- All materials, documents and pamphlets aimed at educating the public on prevention of, treatment of or coping with HIV/AIDS

- 3.4.6** The content of magazines and newsletters, and if practical, websites, must be a mix of articles in the three designated official languages, with subheadings and a short summary in English, where applicable, but excluding specialised literature publications for a specific language. Editors must use their discretion in determining the percentage of content in each language, taking into account the target group of readers. Where appropriate, major articles should alternate among all the designated official languages and contain a short summary in the other designated official languages.
- 3.4.7** Advertisements in the media must be in the designated official language suited for the target group of service providers, readers or applicants.
- 3.4.8** Signage such as information boards, direction boards and name boards at municipal head office buildings, offices, departments and components, must be in the three designated official languages. At institutions serving the public directly such as libraries, branch offices and community centres in the regions numbers of speakers in the particular region or area. The sequencing of languages used on the signage should reflect the linguistic landscape of Letsemeng as reflected in the language distribution, from home language with most speakers to that with least speakers.
- 3.4.9** For all other documents with a public readership generated by the FREE STATE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, a policy of functional multilingualism must be followed, i.e. the documents should be in the designated FSPG official language or languages most appropriate for the target group or groups of readers, taking into account their needs and educational level

3.4.10 International communication on the part of Letsemeng Local Municipality will normally be in English or in the preferred language of the relevant country where practicable.

4. PROMOTION OF LITERATURE IN ALL THE LANGUAGES OF THE FREE STATE

4.1 To encourage the development of all the Free State languages, the provincial government must support and promote writing, literature competitions and campaigns, reading clubs and recording and translation of folklore in all the languages of the diverse Free State communities and cultures, including the Khoi and San languages and culture.

4.2 The promotion of Sesotho literature will receive special attention as envisaged in the Free State Language Policy.

5. TERMINOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Given the great need for development of technical terminology in the African languages, as well as the national trend to decentralise scarce resources in this field in the provinces where these languages are dominant, focusing on one particular language, the Free State Provincial Government will concentrate its resources and efforts on the development of Sesotho terminology. It will pro-actively participate with stakeholders to expand Sesotho terminology to cover all technical fields in respect of its 11 departments that are aimed at producing bilingual term lists for use by language practitioners, educators and other stakeholders.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT

The Language policy will also serve as a code of conduct on written and oral communication with the public and colleagues, in line with the Batho Pele principles.

7. PROMOTION AND AWARENESS

The municipality will raise awareness of the language policy and undertake projects and events aimed at promoting multilingualism, redressing past linguistic imbalances and developing the previously marginalised languages.

8. FREE STATE MUNICIPALITIES

The Letsemeng Local Municipality Language Policy must be in line with the Free State Language Policy. The choice of designated official languages at Letsemeng Local Municipality level is based on the local circumstances of the municipality, such as language distribution, established custom and practical and financial considerations, as well as sensitivity to the preferences of the local communities.

9. COLLABORATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

9.1 The language policy shall be reviewed by the council as and when it is necessary, with emphasis on implementation progress, problems and improvements.

9.2 The Letsemeng Municipality will participate in the Free State Provincial Language Forum or similar forum to be established.

10. THE MONITORING AND ADVISORY ROLE

The municipality will work in close collaboration with the Free State Provincial Language Committee (FSPLC) or any other similar organization in the Province.

11. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Language Policy will be phased in according to the implementation plan, and is regarded as a dynamic and ongoing process that will accommodate future developments, aimed always at seeking the best practice. It will also call for review of the language policy when the need arises.

THIS LANGUAGE POLICY DOCUMENT WAS ADOPTED BY THE
LETSEMENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY DURING A COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON OF 2007.

SIGNED BY THE SPEAKER / MAYOR ON OF 2007.