

PEI French Language Services Act

## **IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

A joint effort between

***La Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin***

and the

**Acadian Communities Advisory Committee**

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## Preamble

According to the 1996 Census, out of a total of 136,200 Island residents, 5,880 indicated that their mother tongue was French. This population is dispersed throughout the province in five main areas including West Prince, Evangeline, Summerside-Miscouche, Rustico and Charlottetown. In fact, the Prince Edward Island Acadian and Francophone community is composed of several regional groups each with their own characteristics. Despite high assimilation and illiteracy rates and a sometimes difficult economic situation, community stakeholders display an impressive vitality. Many community organizations work in several areas of economic, social, cultural and educational development. For the past several years, organizations, in their community development efforts, have been focussing on a certain target clientele : youth, women and seniors.

For the community to be able to reach its full potential, it must be able to live, learn, work and play in French which is why it is important to be able to receive government services in French. The community can count on certain guarantees under the 1969 Official Languages Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms adopted in 1982. In 1987, the Government of Prince Edward Island adopted a French Services Policy. In January of 1996, the Provincial Government adopted a revised French Services Policy as well as guidelines. This policy, committed all Provincial Government Departments and Agencies to continue and improve the delivery of French services provided by the Provincial Government while contributing to the development and growth of the Island Acadian and Francophone community.

Finally, in April 1999, a French Language Services Act was passed by the Government of Prince Edward Island, presenting this government's vision of the use of the French language within government. The purpose of this new Act is to:

- a) define the parameters of the use of French within the Legislative Assembly;
- b) specify the extent of French language services to be provided by government institutions;
- c) specify the extent of the use of French in the administration of justice;
- d) contribute to the development and enhancement of the Acadian and Francophone community.

It was understood from the outset that for financial and staffing reasons, the Government of Prince Edward Island would not enforce all provisions of the Act at the same time. From this perspective, government authorities responsible for its implementation decided to consult the Acadian and Francophone community in order to create a list of priorities for the development of an implementation plan for this new Act.

This report entitled Implementation Considerations focuses on the measures

proposed by this community as implementation components of the French Language Services Act. The priorities established and the proposed measures deal basically with the second and fourth objective of the Act. These objectives b) French language services and d) community development, were given highest priority during the public consultations held in June 1999.

## 2. Community Consultation Framework

### 2.1 Community Strategic Plan and Regional Action Plans

In this rapidly evolving world, the Acadian and Francophone community of Prince Edward Island in 1997, engaged in a planning process which led to the development of a strategic development plan. This strategic plan provided Island Acadians and Francophones with a common vision on how they anticipate their development with relation to their strategic priorities, including education and training, heritage and culture, technology, economy and tourism, political demands and government and community services. The resulting plans of action cover all Acadian regions of Prince Edward Island - West Prince, Evangeline, Summerside-Miscouche, Rustico and Charlottetown. (*Reference: La Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*)

### 2.2 Forum 97

The general purpose of this forum held in September 1997 was to improve communication, collaboration and partnerships between the Acadian and Francophone community and the Federal and Provincial Governments. During this Forum, community and government representatives worked in collaboration to find means to address the main strategic priorities identified by the community in its strategic plan. (*References: Canadian Heritage, Francophone Affairs Division and Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*).

### 2.3 Island Francophone Telecommunity Project

In 1997, the major Acadian and Francophone stakeholders of Prince Edward Island proposed a strategic plan in relation to the Island Acadian and Francophone community's commitment to the development of information and communication technology. The purpose of this strategic plan entitled *Island Francophone Telecommunity Project* was to create a Francophone telecommunity on Prince Edward Island where all community sectors work together to create a knowledge society focussing on innovation and the development of products to be sold around the world through an ongoing knowledge acquisition and community education process. This virtual community development project gives high priority to job creation and continued training especially in the area of ICT. (*Reference: La Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard*)

A memorandum of understanding was signed by the Island Acadian and Francophone community and the Governments of Canada and Prince Edward Island on June 12, 1997 in order to confirm the effort of this community in the areas of human resource development and economic development, particularly knowledge economy. Through this agreement, the parties established a cooperation mechanism, the Knowledge Resource Development Committee made up of representatives of the Federal and Provincial Governments and the Acadian and Francophone community of P.E.I.

## 2.4 1998 Economic Forum

In the fall of 1998 and in keeping with the community's plan, the *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin* organized its first economic forum for Acadian entrepreneurs as well as community economic stakeholders. During this forum, the community was able to confirm economic priorities for community development and create an impressive list of economic projects to be put forward. (*Reference: La Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*).

## 2.5 1995 Acadian Tourism Forum

With regards to the development and promotion of the Acadian tourism product, the Acadian Tourism Forum, held towards the end of 1995, confirmed that the Acadian cultural tourism product on PEI had an excellent growth potential. For the past several years, this economic sector has had a positive impact on the Island Acadian and Francophone communities, particularly in the Evangeline area where tourism is an important source of economic growth. The other Acadian areas want to contribute more to a common development approach and increased promotion of the Island Acadian cultural tourism product.

This provincial forum on Acadian tourism allowed the many stakeholders in attendance to look at the future and suggest development avenues. Among the various issues presented at the Forum, participants looked at new industry trends: cultural tourism and ecotourism as well as the potential of these types of tourism development for their respective communities. The forum also highlighted the importance of making a joint global effort through a more aggressive promotion of the Acadian tourism product at the provincial level, implementing provincial development and marketing strategies and expressing the need for additional human resources to support the Acadian and Francophone community in the implementation of these strategies. (*Reference: Association touristique Évangéline*)

## 2.6 Provincial Meeting on the Integration of ICT in Community Development

Last December, the *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin* organized its first meeting on the integration of information and communication technology in community development. The main purpose of this meeting was to encourage reflection and come to agreement on directions and actions regarding the integration of ICT in the Island Acadian and Francophone community. With approximately 30 community stakeholders in attendance, this technological forum was an opportunity to discuss and adopt the recommendations of the first plan for the integration of ICT in community development (*Reference: La Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*)

## **2.7 Plans of action for the economic and educational sectors**

In the winter of 1999, the *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*, in collaboration with its community partners, prepared action plans for the economic development and education sectors. The plan of action of the economic sector deals with the economic and community development (including the small business and cooperatives, ICT, tourism and human resource development) of the Island Acadian and Francophone population. This action plan for the 1999-2000 fiscal year was prepared for community stakeholders and will serve as a tool to sensitize governments to the particular needs of the Island Acadian and Francophone community in the aforementioned sectors. It could also be an indispensable reference tool for the individuals responsible for various government agreements and measures. The action plan for the education sector addresses the measures anticipated for the next two years (1999-2001) by the Island Acadian and Francophone establishments and organizations in the French language education sector. This overview for the next two fiscal years was also prepared for the many education and community stakeholders as well as for government agencies. (Reference: *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*)

## **2.8 Public consultations on the implementation of the French Language Services Act**

Further to the adoption of the French Language Services Act in April 1999, the Government of Prince Edward Island wanted to consult the Acadian and Francophone population on the implementation of this new Act. Organized by the Acadian Communities Advisory Committee in partnership with the *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*, the consultations were held in each of the five Acadian areas of the province with the purpose of establishing priorities with regards to the implementation of the Act. They also allowed the Acadian and Francophone population to suggest priorities with regards to the four objectives of the Act and express their needs as to the delivery of French languages services in Prince Edward Island. According to the analysis of these consultations, there is a great priority for the implementation of the French Language Services Act in the areas of health, education and tourism development. (Reference: *Acadian Communities Advisory Committee and Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*)

### 3. General Perception of the Community

During the community consultations organized by the Acadian Communities Advisory Committee and the *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin*, the population prioritized objectives (b) and (d) in the implementation of this new French Language Services Act on Prince Edward Island. This does not mean that the other objectives are not important. On the contrary, the implementation of objectives a) the use of French within the Legislative Assembly and c) the extent of the use of French in the administration of justice is an excellent opportunity for the Government of Prince Edward Island to prove its leadership. The effective and expeditious implementation of these last two objectives will be very favourably perceived by the Acadian and Francophone population of Prince Edward Island.

Further to the adoption of the French Language Services Act, the Island Acadian and Francophone population should not have to be concerned about the availability of a service of equal quality in both official languages from Prince Edward Island Government bodies that must provide such services. Service excellence must certainly include the active offer of French services without the public having to ask for it. In addition to the recognized principles of rapidity, reliability, courtesy and respect of individual rights, when a service is not actively offered in French where it is indicated that it is available and of equal quality, it cannot be said that it is a quality service.

Information and communication technology is generally playing a more important role in redefining government administrations. For the Government of PEI, tools must be designed to get the best out of the potential that ICT can provide, especially to offer efficient quality services to the Island Acadian and Francophone clientele. The Internet is now an important tool to promote electronic access to government and services. As to the implementation of the French Language Services Act, the Government of Prince Edward Island will have to adopt a policy on the use of the French language on electronic networks, including the Internet. One of the strategic priorities of the Island Francophone Telecommunity Project is to improve the quantity and quality of government services available to the Island Acadian and Francophone population through the virtual community network. This access can vary from simple access to the Internet to interactive videoconferencing.

The Provincial Government will be able to access the Island Francophone telecommunity network to be able to adequately serve the Island Acadian and Francophone community in the language of its choice. A pilot project is being developed in the Island's five Acadian areas. Government service and program access sites are in place in the *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin's* regional offices. Their mandate includes making government services and information more accessible, especially in French. They will allow Island Francophones to access many government programs and services by using multimedia computers and videoconferencing systems.

In conclusion, the Island Acadian and Francophone population anticipates that the

implementation process of the Act will be completed in three years. The Island Acadian and Francophone community also expects that the Government of Prince Edward Island will put follow-up and evaluation mechanisms in place to determine if the anticipated results are actually occurring. These mechanisms, including a community consultation process, are necessary if the requirements for implementation of this new Act are to be respected.

## 4. Implementation Considerations

### 4.1 Background

#### 4.1.1 Health and Social Services

Despite the many accomplishments, still much remains to be done in the area of health to ensure that the French language population is served adequately. There is still a lack of bilingual services in the area of acute and extended care, public health, child and family health, and violence against women, mental health, nutrition and services for seniors and youth. There is an ongoing need in the Island Acadian and Francophone community to increase French language resources in the areas of education, prevention, promotion and intervention in various health-related areas.

The community sees the delivery of French language services as a priority. (Comment - community consultation, June 1999)

Social and community problems must be addressed. For example, the poverty rate is relatively high especially among single parent families, women, youth and seniors. Unfavourable economic situations often cause social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse as well as family violence. There is also a need to inform the general public of the advantages of sports and recreation as well as healthy living. The development of regional health resource centres could provide the population with French services and material in various health areas.

### 4.1.2 Education

Education and training are of primary importance to the preservation and development of language and culture as well as to community development in general. Much effort has been made in the area of education in the past ten years which has led to tangible and significant success stories. Despite these accomplishments, the community lags behind compared to its Anglophone counterparts and there is much catching up to do. This is due, among other things, that only Evangeline and Charlottetown have access to French schools located in their community. In addition, in the Acadian and Francophone community in general, the illiteracy and assimilation rate is very high and the general education level is relatively low.

The proposed approach recognizes the interrelation between the development of the labour force and economic development. Consequently, the proposed measures should ensure that the

Acadian and population has the skills to address the potential needs of Acadian and

The foundation of Acadian and Francophone communities is education. (Comment - community consultation, June 1999)

Island Francophone necessary present and employers in Francophone

areas and throughout the province as well. Human resource development in the Island Acadian and Francophone community also rests on the ongoing knowledge acquisition principle. The *Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard* is an essential partner in community development, ensuring excellence in the ongoing process of knowledge acquisition including personal, community, professional and postsecondary training.

In the short and medium terms, the following priorities are proposed:

- ✧ Establishment of new French schools and/or French first language education programs in the West Prince, Summerside and Rustico areas.
- ✧ Integration of ICT in schools and the implementation of distance education projects as well as implementation of a professional development plan for the school staff.
- ✧ French literacy and preschool development curriculum as well as school refrancization programs
- ✧ Awareness activities for eligible parents.
- ✧ Conceptualization and establishment of a centre for applied knowledge economy.

### 4.1.3 Tourism

It is through tourism that the Acadians develop at the cultural level. Without this cultural development, there wouldn't be as much pride. (Comment - community consultation, June 1999)

For the past several years, this economic sector has had a positive impact on the Island Acadian and Francophone communities, particularly in the Evangeline area where tourism is an important source of economic growth. The other Acadian areas

want to contribute more to a common development approach and increased promotion of the Island Acadian cultural tourism product. This willingness is in keeping with the planning in progress for the development and promotion of the Prince Edward Island cultural tourism product.

The following tourism development areas were identified as priorities for the next few years in the Island Acadian and Francophone areas:

- ❖ Development and marketing of the Acadian cultural tourism product;
- ❖ Concerted and coordinated approach at the provincial level for the development and promotion of the Acadian and Francophone tourism product;
- ❖ Diversification and development of the tourism product in Acadian areas (i.e. ecotourism and tourism recreation products) and the development of the tourism infrastructure (beaches, etc.);
- ❖ Additional human resources in this sector (locally and provincially).

### 4.1.4 Culture and Heritage

During the 1997 strategic planning exercise, the Island Acadian and Francophone community adopted the principle that culture encompasses all areas of activity, including the

lives, addresses  
It expresses  
arts, handcraft,  
and theatre as  
activity,  
recreation and

It was proposed that education play an instrumental role in cultural development, preservation and growth. (*Community Strategic Plan, 1997*)

way a community  
its needs and plays.  
itself through the  
song, music, dance  
well as economic  
communications,  
sports. It is known

that language is an integral part of culture therefore when we talk about culture, we are also talking about language. This is why when we say preserving the Acadian culture, we also mean the preservation of French, first language. For the Island Acadian and Francophone community, the preservation and development of culture remains a sizeable challenge. The development of the Acadian and Francophone cultural industry remains a priority that can be supported by sectors and products that have already achieved tangible success.

### 4.1.5 Economic Development

In the past few years, Acadian and Francophone small businesses have shown remarkable growth in various economic areas. The number of Acadian and Francophone entrepreneurs is increasing and are more interested in non-traditional sectors. The Acadian and Francophone community recognizes that in a knowledge economy, knowledge constitutes the wealth of a community. It is therefore important to develop a local and provincial economy that will be able to adjust to the multiple changes of the years to come. Further to the many consultations held since 1997, the Island Acadian and Francophone community of Prince Edward Island has established five areas of development that could contribute to economic development and the creation of sustainable jobs: small business and cooperative development, community economic development, tourism development, the development of information and communications technology and the development of human resources.

#### **4.1.6 Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**

We all know that the world economy is in transition. To be able to function and work in the new knowledge society, it is essential that Acadians and Francophones at all levels have a good mastery of information and communications technology (ICT). The measures proposed by the Island Acadian and Francophone community will promote the development of the information and communications technology sector. It is expected that ICT development will foster economic development, tourism, culture, community entrepreneurship, etc. and will provide the tools required by the many community entrepreneurs and stakeholders. The Island Francophone Telecommunity Project and ICT training remain priorities.

#### **4.1.7 Francophone Affairs Division**

With the new PEI French Language Services Act, the Francophone Affairs Division will play an expanded role in the coordination of French services to the residents of Prince Edward Island. It is proposed that this Division will continue to administer the numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements. During the community consultation, it was clear that there is an expectation that Francophone Affairs Division will become the doorway through which community groups will approach government for the funding of interdepartmental initiatives.

It is important to maintain the Francophone Affairs Division. With the increased workload brought about by the new French Language Services Act, the Division will require additional resources to fulfill its mandate. (*Comments - Community Consultations, June 1999*)

The Division will also expand its new role to evaluate the quality of French services on Prince Edward Island. Request for translation services are expected to increase dramatically as the act is implemented. The Division will act as a support team for the French Services Coordinators to ensure the effective implementation of this new act.

#### 4.1.8 Community Development

Despite a relatively small population base, the Acadian and Francophone community has established, through the years, a significant number of provincial and regional organizations that are very active and carry out many projects in their respective fields. This is an

With regards to the 911 program, we'll have to ensure that the calls received in French be answered in French by bilingual staff to avoid jeopardizing the safety of French speaking Islanders. Access PEI centres are becoming very important for the regions because they offer a full line of community services in French. (*Comments - Community Consultations - June 1999*)

indication of the vitality and active participation of the population in the development of the community. For the past few years, financial resources have been limited and certain organizations have had difficulty providing the same level of service they once did. Nevertheless, they are working to implement the community plan and achieve its many objectives. As to the Government of PEI, it will have to take into consideration the plans and the needs already identified, in the development of its policies and programs.

There has been some progress in accessing community services in French. Despite the many accomplishments, there is still a considerable amount of work to be done to be able to adequately serve the population in the French language.

#### 4.2 Implementation Areas per Government Department or Agency

Priorities in the implementation of the French Language Services Act according to the Prince Edward Island Acadian and Francophone community are found in the tables on the following pages. These priorities are presented by department and are divided into two implementation areas: a) measures to be taken under objective (a) of the French Language Services Act and b) community development measures or areas that mainly involve the development of objective d) of the French Language Services Act.

The departments in question are presented in order of priority as determined by the Island Acadian and Francophone community.

- ✧ Department of Health and Social Services
- ✧ Department of Education
- ✧ Department of Fisheries and Tourism
- ✧ Department of Development
- ✧ Department of Technology and Environment

- ✧ Department of Community Services and Attorney General
- ✧ Provincial Treasury
- ✧ Crown Corporations, Agencies and Commissions
- ✧ Department of Transportation and Public Works

<b>4.2.1 Department of Health and Social Services</b>		
	<b>Health and Social Services</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ French services for acute and extended care</li> <li>○ Bilingual staff in public health</li> <li>○ French child and family services</li> <li>○ Bilingual specialists</li> <li>○ Support services in French for families, especially low income single parent families, seniors, as well as people who care for older relatives in their home</li> <li>○ Material for the development of children ages 0 to 6</li> <li>○ French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, etc.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adequate community health services in the various regions</li> <li>○ Privilege the use of information and communications technology in the delivery of French services in the field of health</li> <li>○ Support to the Evangeline Community Health Centre.</li> </ul>

4.2.2 Department of Education		
<b>Education</b>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bilingual senior civil servant at the Division of Higher Learning</li> <li>○ School programs better adapted to the realities and needs of the Island Acadian and Francophone community, i.e. programs specifically designed for the Island Acadian and Francophone school clientele</li> <li>○ Development of French preschool curriculum</li> <li>○ French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.</li> <li>○ Provision of quality French library services to the Francophone population with an up to date collection, competent employees and adequate funding.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Establishment of French schools and/or school-community centres in Island Acadian areas</li> <li>○ Integration of kindergartens in the French language school system</li> <li>○ Literacy programs</li> <li>○ School refrancization programs</li> <li>○ Student recruitment strategy</li> <li>○ Awareness projects for eligible parents</li> <li>○ Establishment of an applied knowledge economy centre</li> <li>○ Integration of ICT in the schools and instructional methods</li> <li>○ Distance education programs</li> <li>○ Special projects for students</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.</li> <li>○ Services of a recreation officer</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Training program to meet the needs of the following sectors: performing arts, handcrafts, museology</li> <li>○ Cultural entrepreneurship development program</li> <li>○ Promotion of artists and cultural products outside the province</li> <li>○ Distribution network for Acadian and Francophone cultural products</li> <li>○ Ongoing development of the Acadian Museum</li> <li>○ Support for Acadian and Francophone festivals and special events.</li> </ul>

<b>4.2.3 Department of Fisheries and Tourism</b>		
<b>Tourism Development</b>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.</li> <li>○ More prominent French services in tourist information centres</li> <li>○ Specialization in Francophone markets within the department</li> <li>○ Bilingual departmental staff</li> <li>○ Francophone senior management position within the department</li> <li>○ Collection and more comprehensive analysis of data on the French tourist clientele on PEI</li> <li>○ Ongoing support for the <i>Association touristique Évangéline</i> (Evangeline Tourism Association)</li> <li>○ Special marketing initiatives for Francophone markets</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provincial Acadian tourism marketing and development strategy</li> <li>○ Support for tourism infrastructure and cultural tourism product development projects</li> </ul>

<b>4.2.4 Department of Development</b>		
<b>Economic Development</b>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community services in French in all Access PEI centres</li> <li>○ Video-conferencing services in the regions in order to ensure the delivery of government programs and services in French</li> <li>○ French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.</li> <li>○ Integration of the community strategic plan in the government process</li> <li>○ Enterprise P.E.I.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support and guidance services for Acadian and Francophone businesses at the provincial level</li> <li>○ Follow-up of the 1998 Economic Forum</li> <li>○ Implementation of the community strategic plan</li> <li>○ Development of the industrial and commercial infrastructure of the Evangeline area</li> </ul>

4.2.5 Department of Technology and Environment		
<b>Technology</b>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.</li> <li>○ Bilingual staff</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implementation of the Island Francophone Telecommunity Project and development of a Island Acadian and Francophone smart community</li> <li>○ Development of the knowledge economy in the Acadian and Francophone community of PEI</li> <li>○ Establishment of community access centres in all Acadian and Francophone areas of the province as well as a network</li> <li>○ Integration of ICT in community development</li> </ul>
<b>French services</b>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expanded role for the Francophone Affairs Division</li> <li>○ Evaluation of the quality of French services provided by the Government of Prince Edward Island</li> <li>○ Increase in the promotion of government services available in French</li> <li>○ Translation into French of the government's Internet site</li> <li>○ Publication of government ads in both official languages</li> <li>○ Evaluation of the implementation of the French Language Services Act</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.6 Department of Community Services and Attorney General

##### Services

- Availability of French services at all times in the 911 program
- French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.
- Bilingual staff
- French inspection services
- French correctional services

#### 4.2.7 Provincial Treasury

##### Services

- French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.
- Interministerial Women's Secretariat
- Island Information Services available in French

#### 4.2.8 Crown Corporations, Agencies and Commissions

##### Services

- French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.
- Bilingual staff
- Public Service Commission
- Human Rights Commission

#### 4.2.9 Department of Transportation and Public Works

##### Services

- Bilingual road signage
- French names for Acadian communities
- French information material, promotional items, literature, forms, permits, etc.
- Bilingual staff