

The Practical Guide to the Official Languages of the Olympic Games

A Planning Tool
for Organising
Committees

ORGANISATION
INTERNATIONALE DE
la francophonie



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The International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) is an institution founded on the basis of a shared language, French, and shared values. It currently has 75 member states and governments, with 56 members and 19 observers which together represent over 890 million people, including 220 million French speakers.

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Introductory

words

At the request of the Heads of State and Government of la Francophonie, the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) committed itself in Athens in 2004 to supporting the efforts of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (OCOG) to ensure that the French language enjoys its rightful status and usage as an official language of the Games.

To this end, in Athens, Turin, Beijing, Vancouver and London, I appointed a Grand Témoin de la Francophonie, tasked before and during the Games with reminding the organising committees of their obligations with regard to official languages and developing specific cooperation projects with the support of the IOF and its members.

After the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing and Vancouver, the respective Grands Témoins de la Francophonie, Jean-Pierre Raffarin and Pascal Couchepin, called on the IOC and the IOF to facilitate the transfer of experience between OCOGs. Mr Couchepin specifically suggested drafting a Best Practice Guide to Languages, drawing on the experience of the IOF and of its IOC and OCOG partners at previous Games.

The Guide is now a reality which I am delighted to present to you. It was designed as a handy tool that would provide the OCOGs with a roadmap, a strategic approach, a methodology and a list of tools and reference materials. The Guide aims to help and encourage the IOC and the OCOGs to organise a bilingual Games, in French and English, as required by the Olympic Charter. By extension, the Guide provides a practical framework for bilingualism or multilingualism when organising any international sporting event such as the Youth Olympic Games, World Championships or international tournaments.



By following these principles and recommendations, the organising committees can be confident of securing the proper exposure for the official languages at the Games, offering an enriching experience for the various audiences involved and developing an excellent reputation both nationally and internationally.

I wish you a pleasant read and trust you will find the Guide useful.

Abdou Diouf
Secretary General of La Francophonie



Olympism, as a philosophy of life, teaches us many things, including learning through experience. As each host city contributes its unique version of the event to Olympic history, it also brings an understanding of what to do and what not to do.

This is why I would like to congratulate the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) for the worthy initiative of publishing a Practical Guide to the Official languages of the olympic Games.

Thanks to contributions from former employees of the Beijing, Vancouver and Singapore Organising Committees, this language tool will doubtless prove a valuable resource and source of information for the preparation and organisation of future Games, insofar as the use of the official languages is concerned.

May I reiterate my congratulations to the IOF for this new Guide and thus for its commitment to enriching the legacy of the Games.

Jacques Rogge
President of the International Olympic Committee

Jean-Pierre Raffarin, Grand Témoin de la Francophonie
at the Beijing Olympics:



Recommendations for the IOC:

13. Develop an IOC-IOF “language code of conduct” that must be built into the specifications of the Olympic Games host cities.

17. Facilitate the transfer of language expertise and know-how between successive OCOGs.



Source: Report on the use of French at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Pascal Couchepin, Grand Témoin de la Francophonie
at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver:



The language efforts and innovations of the Vancouver Games must be of benefit to the next Olympics. I remember the first conversation I had with Francine Bolduc in Vancouver. She said that she felt somewhat helpless in facing the task, given the lack of resources she was dealing with. Apart from the reports of the Grands Témoins de la Francophonie and Appendix A of the Multiparty Agreement, she had no instrument, no guide, no framework, no detailed activity report that might give her a picture of what exactly was expected or how to make the Games a bilingual event.

Yet the issue is hardly a new one and the IOC has knowledge transfer programmes relating to other areas.

The IOF and VANOC therefore decided, when signing the Convention on 14 February 2009, to continue to work together after the Games, in order to provide a formal language legacy.

They therefore agreed (...) to draft a “Best Practice Guide to Languages.” The guide will provide the IOC and the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs) with a set of practical tools and useful advice. ”

Recommendations for the IOF:

7. Continue cooperation with VANOC after the Vancouver Games in order to provide a formal language legacy for the Games.

8. Develop cooperation with the IOC and the OCOGs in London, Sochi and Rio in order to pass on the language legacy of the Vancouver Games and to include this item in the skills transfer programme established by the IOC.

Recommendations for the IOC and the Olympic family:

13. Make the language legacy of the Vancouver Games an integral part of the skills transfer programme designed by the IOC for the OCOGs, using the Best Practice Guide produced by the IOF and VANOC.

Recommendations for future OCOGs:

20. Organise a meeting of the IOC, VANOC and the IOF to discuss the transfer of VANOC and IOF language expertise.

21. Make the “Best Practice Guide for the Vancouver Games” the reference work on which to build concrete tools to encourage bilingualism at the following Games.

Source: Report on the promotion of the French language and La Francophonie at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver.

Michaëlle Jean, Grand Témoin de la Francophonie

at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London:

“The transmission of knowledge and sharing of experience and expertise are key to the success of any collective human endeavour that wishes to respect a heritage in order to better address the future. This is particularly true in the Olympic and francophone contexts, sharing as they do the same values of solidarity and mutual enrichment. Previous editions of the Summer and Winter Games afforded many valuable lessons and innovations that can provide useful solutions for the future. I am delighted that the cooperation between the Grands Témoins de la Francophonie, the IOF, the IOC and the Olympic family has now translated into the publication of this Guide, which offers practical solutions to those who wish and need to organise a bilingual or multilingual sporting event in the best possible conditions. It is my hope that it will become an accepted document for the whole Olympic family and the organising committees.”



Status of the official languages at the Games

The IOF
has
States
and Governments

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**Le baron
Pierre de Coubertin
founded the IOC, revived
the modern Olympic
Games in 1894** and had
an influence on the
establishment of the official
languages of the Games,
i.e. French and English

Official languages planning

for the Paralympic Games
should draw on that of
the Olympics, thus ensuring
a smooth transition that is
economical in terms of
communications, signage
and services

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) recognises the importance of the official languages at the Games, as enshrined in Rule 23 of the Olympic Charter:

- > The official languages of the IOC are French and English.
 - > At all Sessions, simultaneous interpretation must be provided into French, English, German, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.
 - > In the case of divergence between the French and English texts of the Olympic Charter and any other IOC document, the French text shall prevail unless expressly provided otherwise in writing.
- French and English have an important role to play at the Games because they enable communication between the vast majority of athletes, dignitaries, delegations and the general public. It is essential to ensure that all of them feel that they are a part of the great Olympic adventure.
 - The visibility and use of both official languages on an equal footing at the Games can raise awareness of a rich cultural diversity, showcasing it to audiences throughout the world and resonating directly with the Olympic values.
 - Recent editions of the Games have shown that a visible use of French has greatly enriched the experience for all who take part in the Games, whether as athletes, spectators or members of the Olympic family.
 - It is equally important to let the official languages shine at the Paralympic Games, despite there being no obligation, as such, in the Paralympic Charter. However, since they take place after the Olympics, it is easy to plan for proper coverage of the official languages at these Games and to provide a quality service for the Paralympic family and spectators.
 - A significant effort on official languages was made at the first edition of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in Singapore in 2010. Under the Olympic Charter, they were subject to the same rules as the Olympic Games.

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IOC members
are from the
French-speaking
world

A large majority
of athletes come
from French- and
English-speaking
countries

The Youth Olympic Games are:
- **two official languages**,
but there is an even greater
need for multilingualism owing
to the age of the participants;
- **a unique opportunity**
to get to grips with the language,
culture and media used by young
people



Role of the partners in applying the official languages policy

Since 2004, the IOF has appointed a Grand Témoin for each edition of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Key figures have accepted this mission:

> **ATHENS 2004 - Hervé Bourges**,
President of the International Union of
Francophone Press

> **TURIN 2006 - Lise Bissonnette**,
President and CEO of the National Library
and Archives of Quebec

> **BEIJING 2008 - Jean-Pierre Raffarin**,
former French Prime Minister, Senator

> **VANCOUVER 2010 - Pascal Couchepin**,
former President of the Swiss Confederation

> **LONDON 2012 - Michaëlle Jean**,
former Governor General of Canada,
UNESCO, Special Envoy for Haiti

- It is the role of the **IOC** to establish the official languages obligations of the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games and the Youth Olympic Games (YOG). The IOC facilitates, through the organising committees, a more open and multicultural view of the Olympic world; this includes demonstrating cultural diversity and promoting the official languages.
- **The International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF)**, a key partner of the organising committees, aims to ensure that the bilingual experience (English and French) is a real one at the Games. To this end, it has helped to frame and sign agreements setting out the standards which the organising committees may refer to in order to meet the requirements regarding official languages (*see List of tools and reference material / Model agreement*). On the basis of this agreement, and with the support of its Member States and Governments, the IOF is able to provide concrete support to assist organisers in complying with their obligations regarding visibility and use of official languages (help with recruiting translators, interpreters and bilingual or multilingual trainees; help with recruiting journalists able to translate and with off-site translation and assistance in the preparation of glossaries, educational activities, cultural programming, etc.).
- The role of the **Grand Témoin de la Francophonie**, appointed by the Secretary General of La Francophonie, is to clarify the expectations as regards official languages; provide political support and technical expertise; strengthen ties with the francophone Olympic family, particularly with IOC members; facilitate the involvement of the international francophone community; and support the efforts of the OCOG before, during and after the Games.
- The role of the **Organising Committees for the Olympic Games** is to plan and produce a bilingual experience in all the various organisational aspects of the Games.
- The role of **sponsors and government partners** of the Games is to work with the organising committees to deliver this bilingual experience.
- In order to promote the multicultural aspect of the Games, it is useful for the organising committees to involve the various **local, regional, national and international sociocultural groups** which have human, linguistic and cultural resources to offer (*see List of tools and reference material / Model cooperation agreement*).

The International Organisation of La Francophonie, with its Member States and Governments, **is a key partner in promoting the organisation of a bilingual Games and ensuring the French language is respected**

The **success** of the official languages component requires **everyone to make an effort** (OCOG, partners and sponsors of the Games)

The IOF contributes in several ways towards ensuring that French is used at the Games (strategic and practical advice, programming of artists that enrich the cultural component and demonstrate the diversity of the French language and of francophone culture, support for recruiting translators, mobilisation of local francophone embassies to assist the organising committee)



Implementation plan

To ensure real success, **the official languages need to be seen, heard, read and experienced** – they must be an integral part of all aspects of the Games. It is also essential to ensure that a high quality, uniform standard of French is used.

Organising Committees are strongly recommended to familiarise themselves with official languages expectations by consulting the following documents:

- Olympic Charter
www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_fr.pdf
- Grand Témoin Reports
www.francophonie.org/Democratie-langue-francaise-dans.html
- Model agreement (IOF/OCOG)
 - Beijing Olympics: Appendix to the Report by Jean-Pierre Raffarin
www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/OIF_RapportRaffarin-2.pdf
 - Vancouver Olympics: Appendix to the Report by Pascal Couchepin
www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/OIF_RapportCouchepin.pdf
- Technical Manual of Language Services, available in the host city contract (available from every OCOG)
- Cooperation Agreement with government partners and groups (available from every OCOG)

In summary, these expectations cover the following aspects:

- All communication with the public and participants must take place simultaneously in both official languages (official speeches, signs, literature, website, official slogan and its use on all banners, media information, posters, documents and promotional items, advertisements in the print media, technical documents for the Olympic family and spectators).
- Services to the public, participants and the Olympic family (athletes, coaches and officials) must be provided in the two official languages both before and during the Games, including health, safety and emergency services.

It takes more than hiring bilingual people, including a few translators, to ensure the success of the official languages aspect of the Games

In terms of cultural programming, **use of both official languages applies to both the written and oral aspects of presentations and performances**

Social networks and official languages at the Games: both an opportunity and a challenge for the organising committees to showcase the French language and francophone culture

Who can meet these challenges?



- The official language communities of the Games must be included and represented in the written and oral components of ceremonies and cultural activities.
- The organising committee establishes translation and interpreting needs.
- The organising committee must have satisfactory bilingual capacity among its staff and volunteers, including within its management team.

For the Paralympics, there are no obligations as such in the contracts but, as with the Olympics, the public, media and athletes expect:

- all communications and services to be provided in both official languages, with the exception of technical manuals, which do not have to be translated;
- the official language communities of the Games to be included and represented in the written and oral components of ceremonies and cultural activities;
- satisfactory bilingual capacity among staff and volunteers so that an adequate service can be provided.

For the Youth Olympic Games, in addition to taking account of the status of French and English at the Olympic Games, it is also important to provide language services for the other languages represented there (especially Spanish, Russian and Arabic). This is necessary because the participants are so young and, unlike their elders, do not always speak English or French; and to implement the YOG educational programme, which presupposes being able to communicate with young people and enabling them to communicate with each other.

In addition, the athletes' youth also involves finding the best way to reach them and involve them (e.g. by tailoring the tone of publications, vocabulary and communication tools and by training staff and volunteers to provide services in a way that reflects the cultural diversity of the young athletes represented at the Games).

The following implementation plan is based on established best practice and the lessons learned by different OCOGs in respect of official languages, and provides a clear picture of the issues that need to be considered:



1. Internal component: building an organisational culture within the OCOG

1.1 /// Make the OCOG management team aware of the official languages requirement and secure their understanding and approval. Make sure they understand what is required to deliver a bilingual experience and to guarantee quality translation.

1.2 /// Appoint a Head to lead an official languages team; highlight their role within the OCOG and enable them to ensure it can make visible progress throughout the preparation of the Games.

1.3 /// Make all managers and employees aware of the issues (through presentations, individual meetings between the official languages team and managers, and regular progress reports).

1.4 /// Develop an internal language policy that covers items such as which variety of French to use, internal and external communications, etc. (*see List of tools and reference material / Language policy*).

1.5 /// Include the subject of official languages (political and language awareness) when training new employees and, subsequently, volunteers.

1.6 /// Develop activities to promote official languages for OCOG employees and the management team (e.g. courses in French or English, cultural activities, competitions).

1.7 /// Work closely with OCOG departments to help them include official languages in their strategic and operational plans for the Olympic and Paralympic Games - resources will have to be planned well in advance for some departments (INFO intranet system, website advertisements, cultural programming, recruitment, speeches at the ceremonies, interpreting services for international federations, Francophone National Olympic Committees, heads of mission and athletes).

1.8 /// Establish translation needs, including a list of all publications to be translated, and recruit a suitably qualified team that is big enough to provide a quality service.



2. External component: building and developing partnerships

2.1 /// Ensure all OCOG partners are aware of the importance of official languages and that they are involved in delivering the bilingual experience during the Games (check contracts, if necessary). This includes the authorities of the host city, which will need to plan the signage not just for the Games venues but also for local transport (metro systems, airports, taxis, buses – see 3.5)

2.2 /// Educate, encourage and motivate sponsors through meetings to raise awareness of the official languages and develop cooperation to enable the organising committees to provide a bilingual experience in terms of signage, advertising displays, services to be provided by bilingual staff and cultural programming.

2.3 /// Identify official language partners (groups, associations, colleges/universities and local, regional and international institutions, including the IOF) who are willing to lend their support and work towards a successfully bilingual Games. Identify potential forms of collaboration - this may take the form of programmes to involve young people as volunteers before and during the Games, or to develop and/or take part in competitions relating to the Games, etc.

2.4 /// Establish an advisory committee, to include one member from each of the key francophone partners (at the local, national and international level). Its task would be to strengthen the vital links between the official language partners and to identify opportunities for them to make an even greater contribution to the Games. Thanks to their ability to influence governmental and other authorities, committee members would be able to provide the OCOG with strategic advice relating to the inclusion of bilingual culture of the Games.

3.7 // Planning interpreting services (consecutive and simultaneous) for all meetings of the IOC Executive Board and other committees (athletes, medical, media, legal) and for Games press conferences and the daily meetings of heads of mission before and during the Games. It is recommended that the same person should interpret at heads of mission meetings and the same translator should translate the reports of the meetings. Establishing which language services are to be available by telephone and the number of interpreters required to provide all services for athletes, doping control officers, technical officials, media officials at Games venues, medical services, interviews with athletes in the mixed zone, arbitration committee, etc. Warning interpreters that they will not always be working in optimal conditions for a conference interpreter. For example, there may be, as with the YOG, informal discussions around a table rather than in a room equipped with interpreting booths.

3.8 // Translating athletes' biographical profiles and all "breaking news" information for the intranet system used by the media during the Games (INFO 20xx).

3.9 // Translating the Official Report of the Games into both official languages.



➔ **4. Services component**

4.1 /// Provision of bilingual staff at all general information and sales points (tickets, merchandise) either by phone or in person to provide services to the general public, the media and the Olympic family.

4.2 /// Work with the human resources department to ensure there is an adequate bilingual workforce (employees and volunteers) in the strategic locations where the services are to be provided.



The plan for each site should be examined and confirmation provided of the positions to be assigned to each service point serving the public, the press, athletes and the Olympic family. A sufficient number of bilingual people must then be assigned to each team and every bilingual person must be identifiable via a pin badge.

4.3 /// Training for all employees and volunteers for the Games should include a workshop on the provision of services in the official languages for staff who do not speak one of the official languages (how to answer questions from the public and refer them to someone who speaks an official language).

4.4 /// Work closely with the department responsible for drawing up work schedules during the Games, so that bilingual staff can be available at all times and at all service points.



→ 5. Cultural component

5.1 /// Guarantee bilingualism on the Olympic torch relay route, either through the participation of torch bearers, communities, or cultural events during the relay.

5.2 /// Ensure the different cultural communities (including local, national and international francophone and anglophone groups and artists) can play their part in the cultural programme of the Games (Cultural Olympiad, opening and closing ceremonies). Also make sure oral and written communications are available during the performances.

5.3 /// Since the opening ceremony provides an outstanding opportunity to showcase the official languages, it is essential to plan everything (bilingual speech by the IOC President, the Chair of the OCOG and the host country authorities, signage, announcements, commentaries, artistic performances) and to select artists who are representative of the official languages.

5.4 /// Consider setting up a village as the “home of La Francophonie” and work with local, national and international groups (including local embassies and the IOF) to bring francophone, francophile and anglophone artists together and showcase their work.





Planning the Games

Calendar for
the official languages

To ensure effective planning and a successful official languages programme at the Games, it is important to coordinate the planning stages with those of the Games, as described below:



1. Organisation

Five years before the Games

Clarify expectations.

Alert OCOG management team to official languages requirements.

Recruit a number of bilingual management staff and identify positions requiring bilingual employees.

Develop attributes of an organisational culture (language policy, training for new employees, etc.).

Clarify language expectations in contracts with national/local sponsors and media.



2. Strategic planning

Four years before the Games

Create the structure for the official languages – appoint a Head and train the team, which includes translation and interpreting services.

Establish all translation and interpreting needs, plan for the required resources and prepare the logistics for translation services (build the team, an effective translation request service, a common terminology database and reference materials from previous Games). If inexperienced translators or interpreters are to be hired, plan in a training period of at least two months on sports terminology and the Olympic culture to ensure their efficiency.

Establish the budget required.

Frame a strategic plan for the official languages.

Implement attributes of an organisational culture (French/English courses, promotional activities for the official languages, etc.).

Educate partners (education and cooperation meetings).

Develop partnerships to secure maximum available resources (human and financial).

Work with the Human Resources Department to plan adequate recruitment of bilingual staff (employees and volunteers) and establish a method for assessing their language skills.

Meet with departmental managers to discuss the whole issue of including the official languages in their strategic plan.

Forward-planning for the translations required for the INFO 20xx system.

Designate the role of the “official languages champions” for all major positions in the OCOG.



3. Operational planning

Two to three years before the Games

Meet with departmental managers to discuss including official languages in their operational plan, not only for the Olympics but also for the Paralympics (be sure to cover the communication, services and cultural components).

Set up an advisory committee and hold meetings every year and, if necessary, in the run-up to the Games.

Reconfirm all translation needs and adjust resources as required.

Identify and plan the professional interpreting services required.

Confirm the bilingual signage to be produced for the Games (quality and uniformity).

Provide for pin badges identifying bilingual volunteers and staff and ensure there is an efficient distribution system for them.

Work closely with OCOG sponsor account executives to plan their collaboration on official languages.

Adjust the official languages budget as required.



4. Test events

Eight to twelve months before the Games

Designate the role of the “Official Languages Champions” at all Games venues.

Confirm with the human resources department that resources have been allocated for bilingual posts for each team.

Take part in and/or observe the test events and suggest recommendations as appropriate.

Hold meetings of the coordinating committee – to assess progress and make recommendations to the OCOG.

Hire trainee translators.



5. In the run-up to the Games

Two to four months before the Games

Perform a reconnaissance inspection of all venues and take corrective action as required (signage, bilingual volunteers wearing their pin badges at service points, announcements at venues, etc.).

Work with the uniforms team to ensure that pin badges are distributed to bilingual staff.

Plan for rotation of official languages staff at the venues and ensure that any language problems are corrected immediately.

Hire trainee translators.



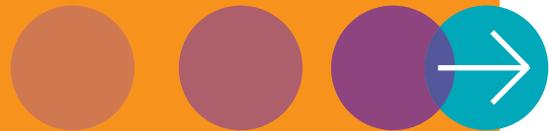
6. End of the Games

Compile a report of what has been done and share it with future OCOGs (via the IOC report).

Provide the French version of the Official Report of the Games.



Conclusion



List
of tools and
reference
material

The preparation and implementation of a plan to incorporate official languages into the Games poses significant challenges. However, it is possible to proudly present a memorable bilingual experience at the Games with:

- initiative and coordination on the part of the OCOG, clearly demonstrating its vision, passion and determination, and taking ownership of this aspect of the Games;
- a robust communications system within the OCOG and also with partners/sponsors of the Games;
- proper planning for the official languages as soon as preparation for the Games begins.

While bilingualism is difficult to achieve both for political, economic or purely practical reasons,
it is entirely possible to find innovative solutions to create a bilingual experience that will enrich the Games

-
- **Model agreement** (IOF/OCOG)
 - Beijing Olympics: Appendix to the Report by Jean-Pierre Raffarin
www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/OIF_RapportRaffarin-2.pdf
 - Vancouver Olympics: Appendix to the Report by Pascal Couchepin
www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/OIF_RapportCouchepin.pdf
 - **Model cooperation agreement** (Francophone Community/OCOG)
www.francophonie.org/-Ressources
 - **Language policy**
www.francophonie.org/-Ressources
 - **Strategic plan: official languages**
www.francophonie.org/-Ressources
 - **Brochure on the bilingual experience of the Games**
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