

Local Government Management Agency

**Language Scheme 2017 - 2020
Under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003**

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction & Background

The Chief Executive of The Local Government Management Agency (“the Agency”) was requested to prepare a scheme by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (“the Act”). Section 11 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide.

- through the medium of Irish,
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Act, language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whichever is the later.

1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

This is the second language scheme of the Local Government Management Agency. The Agency is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on a range of factors including the following:

- the level of demand for such services
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of services in the Irish language; and
- The resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the Agency to develop or access the necessary language capability to provide these services.

In accordance with the Guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under Section 12 of the Act, the Agency carried out a consultation process with our customers, who are those who are directly or indirectly recipients of our services. The Agency also published a bilingual notice, under Section 13 of the Act, on the website Tuairisc.ie on 29th June up to 14th July. This advertisement invited representations in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme under Section 11 from any interested parties.

An internal survey was also carried out to ascertain the level of competency in the Irish language in the Agency.

1.3 Commencement Date of the Language Scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The scheme is commenced with effect from 09 October 2017 and will remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is the later.

2 Overview of the Local Government Management Agency

2.1 Introduction

The Local Government Management Agency (www.lgma.ie) is a State agency established in 2012 following the merger of the Local Government Management Services Agency (LGMSB), the Local Government Computer Services Agency (LGCSB) and the integration of An Comhairle Leabharlanna (ACL) functions.

The LGMA is primarily funded by Local Authorities, and operates in the local government sector, reporting on performance as required to our parent department, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

The Agency aims to meet the needs of Local Authorities and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPCLG) in delivering on the public-sector reform agenda in the local government sector (particularly in terms of sectoral approaches to service delivery), researching emerging and identified issues, assisting Local Authorities in the implementation and measurement of change, and supporting in general, enhanced performance by the local government sector

2.2 Customers & Clients

Local Government in Ireland consists of 31 counties/cities with an overall total of 114 independent organisations, operating within a legal framework defined primarily by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The technology and infrastructure within the sector where LGMA operates has changed hugely in the last 35 years.

The external forces of the broader e-Government agenda both in Ireland and at EU level are pushing change at an unprecedented rate. This new era challenges us to rethink how a substantially improved public sector can positively enhance all our lives. This includes service delivery to citizens and business, efficiency and effectiveness measures in the use of public resources, and participation by citizens in the democratic process of government to ensure their inclusion and empowerment.

Continuing implementation of LGMA's Strategic Plan will depend on the unique partnership between LGMA and Local Authorities on all aspects of strategies building on the in-depth and shared understanding which ensures that LGMA remains fully aware and focused on issues of strategic importance to Local Authorities.

2.3 Agency Structure

The organisation is structured along the lines of a set of interlocking and complementary elements, divided into six broad areas of strategic activity:

- *Assist Local Authorities in the set-up and establishment of defined shared services for the Sector*
- *Provide Leadership, support and advice in HR Strategy & Policy, training and development, health & safety, change management, child safeguarding, equality, workplace partnership and libraries development*
- *Provide support and advice in national HR negotiations, professional representation and advisory services*
- *Provision of the principal ICT services required by a Local Authority through the combination of sectoral knowledge, technical skills & competence and economies of scale.*
- *Provide ICT consultancy in the programme group lines of business and corporate services of local authorities, the infrastructure and applications support required and Research & Development activities to sustain the sector's services.*
- *The Office of Local Authority Management (OLAM) to co-ordinate between central, local government and other third parties and to represent the LA sector in a wide variety of policy areas that impact on local authorities.*

3 Assessment of Extent to which services are already available through Irish

The LGMA, given the nature of its functions and work, does not have a high level of direct contact with, or provide schemes and services, directly or indirectly, to individual members of the public.

It does however provide schemes and services to local authorities. These schemes and systems may be public facing but it is the local authority which is responsible for providing the service, either directly or indirectly, to individual members of the public. Some of the public facing systems currently supported and maintained by the LGMA are available through Irish.

Services are provided by the Agency primarily through English except for the documents published in both Irish and English under Section 10 of the Act. Documents such as Annual Report, Financial Accounts and Strategy Documents are published in both Irish and English.

3.1 Documentation/services not available through Irish

Because of the nature of the Agency, a substantial proportion of documentation produced is outside the scope of a scheme under the Official Languages Act. This is because documentation is for internal purposes or is of technical services nature and not made available to the public or classes of the public. As such, these documents will continue to be available in English only.

Documents of a specialist or technical nature produced by the Agency not designed for the public include requests for tender documentation and technical instruction manuals. It also includes details of internal documents prepared by the Agency.

4 Enhancement of Services to be Provided Bilingually

4.1 Correspondence

Commitment	
The Agency will initiate correspondence in Irish with those who are known to prefer to correspond in Irish. Staff will be instructed to maintain a record of such persons with a view to fulfilling this commitment.	Mandatory

4.2 Website and E-Mail

Commitment	
The Agency's website is navigable in both the Irish and English Language. An Irish version of all static content of the website is provided.	Mandatory
The Agency provides bilingual standard headings and disclaimers on the Agency's email system	Mandatory

4.3 Publications

In addition to documents coming within the scope of section 10 of the Act, the Customer Service Action Plan will be published bilingually. All Agency bilingual publications will be within the same cover in accordance with best practice.	Mandatory
Where a publication is to be produced bilingually, it will be assumed that the document is not ready for publication unless both language versions are available.	Mandatory
Any press releases, information leaflets and brochures (aimed at ordinary members of the public) issued by the Agency will be issued in both English and Irish simultaneously.	Mandatory

4.4 IT Systems

Commitment	<i>Timescale</i>
<p>Provision of functions in Irish will be facilitated at the request of local authorities and other customers, when major upgrades to public facing systems, including interactive systems, are being implemented subject to compatibility issues. As some systems are very complex relational systems developed in-house over many years, and retro-fitting is difficult, costly and resource-intensive, impact analyses will be required for each upgrade.</p>	<p>On Request</p>
<p>The Agency will facilitate local authorities and other customers who require that any new public facing systems, including interactive systems, developed by the Agency will allow for any public facing communications (such as letter, application forms, etc.) to be made available from the system in both Irish and English.</p>	<p>On Request</p>
<p>The Agency will facilitate local authorities and other customers who require that new public facing systems developed by the Agency will be bilingual.</p>	<p>On Request</p>
<p>The Agency will ensure that any new public facing systems procured from 3rd parties will be specified as bilingual as requested by our customers where it is available and within timescales for delivery of the systems.</p>	<p>On Request</p>
<p>The Agency will ensure that all new PCs and printers purchased will be fully capable of handling the Irish language</p>	<p>Mandatory</p>

4.5 Means of Communication with the Public

Commitment	Timescale
Reception staff operating the switchboard answer with the name of the LGMA in Irish and English; they are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish, and arrangements are in place to transfer callers to the appropriate service through Irish. We will continue to up skill switchboard staff over several schemes.	Currently in place

4.6 Recruitment and Staffing

Commitment	Timescale
Where bilingual communication skills through the medium of Irish and English are considered essential or desirable for any post, this will be specified in the job specification	Currently in Place
All new members of staff will be introduced the Irish Language Scheme and its implications for the way they execute their job as part of their induction training.	Currently in Place
Publicity will be given to the fact that in accordance with equal opportunities practice, Irish-speakers, those who can communicate bilingually and English-speakers, are welcome to join the workforce.	Currently in Place
Access to Irish language classes will be made available to all staff	Currently in Place

5 Improving the Agency's Irish Language Capability

The Agency is committed to building on the existing levels of knowledge and competency in relation to Irish language skills currently available within the Agency. To ascertain the level of expertise in Irish among staff a survey has been carried out of staff asking them to rate their ability to write, read and speak Irish. While a large response to the survey was received, it clearly indicated that the existing level of competence to deal with administrative and technical issues through Irish is rather limited.

There will be a need for significant effort over a long number of years to raise the level of knowledge and competency in relation to the Irish language. The principal mechanism to deepen the capacity of the Agency to transact more of its business through the medium of Irish is the training and development of the Agency's staff.

In this context, and as part of an ongoing commitment to provide appropriate training and development for staff to meet the evolving needs of the Agency's customers and to develop the potential of staff, it is planned to take the following steps throughout the duration of the current scheme:

- The Agency will facilitate staff, who wish to attend Irish language classes
- Advice will be provided to staff in relation to the range of high-quality Irish language classes available outside office hours (i.e. third-level Diploma in Irish) and financial support will be provided to staff pursuing such courses under the Educational Assistance Programme.

With a view to improving both the level and standard of its services provided bilingually to the public the Agency will implement the following general and specific measures by the end of this scheme:

Receptionist/switchboard operators, who are the first points of contact with the public, will be offered training to enable them to be able to provide the name of the Agency in Irish and English and to be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.	Currently in Place
Staff who are willing to deal with telephone queries in Irish will be identified by a 'G' on phone lists provided to receptionist and switchboard operators.	Currently in Place

5.1 Publicising Agreed Scheme

Staff are aware of the Agency's requirement to prepare this scheme under the Official Languages Act. Detailed guidance and instructions will be made available to those who may need to implement Irish Language measures. Staff will be made aware of their responsibilities under the scheme through a variety of means. This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. A bilingual version of the scheme will be made available on our website and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies. Other means to publicise the scheme may also be used, for example:

- **Official Launch**
- **Advertising of provisions**

A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga.