

Harris County

# Pollution Control Services

Dr. Latrice Babin, Executive Director

Established in 1953



## Pollution Control Services (PCS) Bilingual Compensation Policy

**Revision 4**

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## Scope

The Bilingual Compensation policy applies to all Harris County Pollution Control Services (PCS) full-time employees. This policy has been reviewed by Human Resources & Risk Management.

## Purpose

This policy sets forth requirements for bilingual certification, expected duties, and compensation for performing bilingual tasks. These tasks will be clearly specified, with a set type, duration, and objective that is outside of the normal customer service practices **(i.e.: bilingual pay is not intended for routine tasks such as answering phones where occasional and basic verbal bilingual communication may occur).**

PCS will pay a salary stipend to employees who achieve Level 2+ proficiency. These salary stipends are paid biweekly with eligible employees' regular salary and do not transfer with an employee for employment outside of Harris County Pollution Control or to positions that do not require bilingual skills. Executive Leadership positions are excluded from the compensation benefit.



## General Expectations

PCS is committed to providing the highest level of service to all members of the community. To address language barriers, PCS supports employee participation in this program to better serve Harris County residents.

Demographic studies have indicated that the three most spoken, non-English, languages used by Harris County residents are:

- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Mandarin

Testing will be made available to certify employees for business-related translation of any of these three languages.

The total number of participants will be at the Executive Director's discretion.

## I. Eligibility

- Eligible employees must be employed full-time with PCS for a minimum of four months.



- Eligible employees must be in good standing and not serving a probationary period due to poor performance or policy violations.
- Eligible employees must work in a capacity where multi-lingual abilities are beneficial in the performance of their job duties and positively impact the Department's delivery of service.
- Employees who qualify to receive Bilingual Compensation must be willing to accept special assignments to provide bilingual coverage for the department. Employees unable or unwilling to accept such an assignment cannot participate in the program, or, if already enrolled, will be subject to forfeiture of Bilingual Compensation.
- Employees who fail to qualify for Bilingual Compensation or who do not pass the certification exam may reapply for consideration after 90 days. Retesting fees will be paid by the employee.

## II. Application Procedure

- Interested applicants must notify their manager and/or Deputy Director who will, in turn, determine whether they meet eligibility requirements.
- If eligible, and approved, the candidates will submit a completed Bilingual Compensation Application to PCS' HR liaison.
- All paperwork, documentation, and qualifications must be completed before an employee will be evaluated.



- The Harris County HR liaison will contact the Berlitz Houston Language Center to schedule an evaluation date upon request by PCS' HR liaison.

### III. Testing Requirements

- If the applicant does not successfully pass the evaluation, any re-testing fees will be paid by the employee.
- The Center will transmit the exam results to the HR Liaison. The HR Liaison will contact the PCS HR Liaison with the results.

### IV. Testing Format

The *Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI)* is a computer-based speaking proficiency test that measures candidates' oral communicative ability.

The *Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE)* measures candidates' writing proficiency by completing three tasks that are authentic to a professional setting.

Results will be provided to the PCS HR liaison and test-taker

### V. Compensation



Certified staff will receive compensation as determined by Harris County Commissioner's Court. As of 5-16-23, bilingual compensation is as follows:

- Compensation for Spanish, Vietnamese, or Mandarin verbal certification is \$75/Month (\$34.62/bi-weekly)
- Compensation for Spanish, Vietnamese, or Mandarin verbal and written certification is \$150/Month (\$69.23/bi-weekly)

Compensation paid to an employee for bilingual ability is separate from the employee's base compensation. It will remain in effect if the employee continues to meet eligibility requirements, uses these skills continuously, and the PCS budget has the available funds.

## VI. Expiration

Re-qualification is required three years from the date the compensation was first granted and every three years after that. It is the employee's responsibility to contact the HR Liaison 30 days before the expiration of their eligibility period to initiate the renewal/requalification process.

Requalification follows the same process as the initial application.