



DATE: April 2024
TO: Payroll Clerks, HR Liaisons
FROM: Rosie Rocha and Eder Villa Valencia, HR Technicians
SUBJECT: 2024 Bilingual (English/Spanish) Proficiency Process and Request Form - Update 4/2024

Human Resources will continue scheduling and administering bilingual proficiency testing on an as-needed basis during 2024. If/when a bilingual proficiency test is needed, please submit the Bilingual Proficiency Exam Request Form to **both** Rosie Rocha, Rosie.Rocha@sonoma-county.org and Eder Villa Valencia, Eder.VillaValencia@sonoma-county.org. Test dates and times will be scheduled as requests are received. At present, Human Resources is administering the exam over Zoom using video conferencing.

- Per the applicable MOU or Salary Resolution, designated bilingual positions require specific bilingual language skills on an average of at least 10 percent of the position's work time.
- Top candidate(s) for designated bilingual positions must be tested by the Human Resources Department before issuing a conditional job offer.

If you have a vacancy and would like to open a recruitment to hire a bilingual employee, please contact your assigned [Human Resources Recruitment and Classification Analyst](#) to discuss recruitment options, including whether your request meets the criteria of being a bona fide occupational qualification for employment.

If you have questions regarding the enclosed Bilingual Proficiency Exam Request Form and Testing Process, please contact either Rosie Rocha, Rosie.Rocha@sonoma-county.org, 707-565-8870 or Eder Villa Valencia, Eder.VillaValencia@sonoma-county.org, 707-565-1751.

Effective immediately, employees re-hired within six (6) months of separation will not be required to be retested for the same level or lower level of proficiency for which they had been previously certified.

The following process will be used to test bilingual (English/Spanish) skills:

1. The Department Head or Designee determines the level of proficiency (basic/fluent) required to perform the duties of the position:
 - a. **Basic:** the ability to verbally communicate in English and Spanish effectively, conversationally proficient. The individual will speak only, and work will be limited to providing verbal information to clients and the public. They will not translate text or transcribe verbal communications.
 - i. Example: An Office Assistant or Receptionist primarily assists the public by answering questions, such as the location of another building, the restroom, locating an appropriate form, etc.
 - b. **Fluent:** the ability to speak, read, write, and translate between English and Spanish, at a highly proficient level. Translation is defined as the process of translating words or text from one language into another. This level is used for positions where employees may have a higher degree of interaction with and responsibility to the public or clients.
 - i. Example: A Social Service Worker primarily assigned to work in a courtroom setting, in which their clients need verbal information translated from English to Spanish.
2. The Department submits a certified/complete Bilingual Proficiency Exam Request Form to HR.

3. HR schedules the individual(s) for the next available exam session. HR conducts bilingual exams on a weekly basis.
 - a. **"No Shows" and last-minute cancellations will not be automatically rescheduled.**
4. HR tests the examinee(s) at the level requested by the Department.
 - a. **Basic:** This exam has 7 work-related exam questions. Exam Raters may allow some mixed language use and can simplify the questions to aid the examinee in understanding and responding to the questions. Speech may not be grammatically correct. The Raters will assess the examinee's ability to understand and use a common vocabulary, handle day-to-day verbal communication, and determine whether the examinee can be easily understood by a monolingual person.
 - b. **Fluent:** This exam has 3 sections: conversational, oral reading/translation, and a writing performance exercise. At this highly proficient level, the examinee is expected to fully comprehend and correspond in both English and Spanish. With the understanding that specialized terms in their area of responsibility will be learned on the job, Exam Raters assess the examinee's command of language to determine their ability to perform the duties of the position.
5. Within approximately one week of the exam:
 - a. If the candidate has passed the exam, HR will send exam results to the examinee, HR Liaison, and Payroll Clerk. This formal notice is viable for the duration of the examinees' employment with the County of Sonoma and should be placed in their personnel file.
 - b. If the candidate has failed the exam, HR will notify the HR Liaison and Payroll Clerk to discuss applicable next steps. After that conversation has occurred, HR will send the results to the examinee, HR Liaison, and Payroll Clerk.
6. Once the department has been notified that an examinee has passed the exam, the Payroll Clerk should process the bilingual premium. The amount of the premium is determined by the MOU or Salary Resolution representing the position. Please refer to [Labor Agreements & Salary Resolution \(ca.gov\)](#) for the applicable rates.

**County of Sonoma
Bilingual Proficiency Exam Request Form**

Employees re-hired within six (6) months of separation will not be required to be retested for the same level or lower level of proficiency for which they had been previously certified.

Select the Level to be Tested

- Basic (Conversational):** Speaking/Comprehension: Conversationally proficient. Ability to understand and use common vocabulary of daily speech and handle verbal communication tasks. Can be easily understood by a monolingual individual. May not be grammatically correct.
- Fluent (Highly Proficient):** Speaking/Comprehension/Reading/Writing: Highly proficient in all applications. Verbally articulate; grammatically correct; clear, accurate, and precise in writing and translation of written materials.

<u>Candidate/Employee Information</u>	
Candidate or Existing Employee (If this is an existing employee, provide their employee number)	
Was a recruitment conducted to advertise this position? (If "Yes", provide the Requisition Number)	
Job Title	
First and Last Name	
Phone Number(s)	
Email Address (Work or Home)	
Mailing Address	
Name of Payroll Clerk and Contact Number	

I hereby certify that the position occupied by the individual named above is a designated bilingual position that requires the use of the second language an average of at least 10% of the incumbent's time.

Signature of Department Head or Designee

Date

(If Designee Signature, Position Title)

Phone Number