



Responsible Office: Procurement Operations
Administering Official: Executive Director, Procurement Operations
Effective Date: May 30, 2025
Applicable Policy: Procurement Guidelines 1

Procurement Guidelines are issued by the Executive Director under Article 1 of the Houston Community College Procurement Operations Procedures Manual.

Procurement Operations Guidelines in regard to “Gifts”

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

As internal guidelines and supplemental guidance under Article 3.1 of the Houston Community College Procurement Procedures Manual, “Ethics,” this Guideline shall govern the conduct of all Staff, Supervisors, Managers, the Director, and the Executive Director employed in the Procurement Operations Department. The Procurement Operations Department, which includes Small Business, Sourcing, and Contract Administration functions, is responsible for all goods and services procurement for Houston Community College System. All employees are subject to these standards.

This Procurement Guideline is supplemental to all State Statutes and Houston Community College resolutions and policies governing employee standards of conduct and conflicts of interest, including Article 3, Procurement Standards of the Procurement Operations Procedures Manual.

The State-Compliant Gift Policy is in effect May 1, 2025 by way of a memorandum signed by the Executive Director on that date and has been updated to align with Texas ethics laws governing permissible gifts. The purpose of this Guideline is to ensure compliance with state regulations while maintaining impartiality, equal treatment, and the highest standards of conduct in vendor relations.

GUIDELINES

To uphold integrity and avoid conflicts of interest, the following standards shall apply to all Procurement Operations Department staff:

1. Gift Restrictions:

- No cash, checks, gift cards, or negotiable instruments may be accepted under any circumstances.
- Non-cash gifts exceeding \$50 in value are prohibited unless exempt under Texas law (e.g., familial/personal relationships independent of official duties).
- Vendor-branded items (pens, calendars, etc.) below \$50 may be accepted only if they do not create the appearance of favoritism.

2. Definitions:

- **Gift:** Any item, service, or benefit offered by a vendor, including food, beverages, and event invitations. Greeting cards without monetary value are permitted.
- **Vendor:** Any business entity or individual acting on behalf of a business, regardless of existing contractual status with HCC.

3. **Vendor Communication:**

- Vendors should be informed of this policy and its emphasis on ethical neutrality.
- Prohibited gifts received must be returned to the vendor or, if impractical, donated to a nonprofit institution unrelated to HCC.

4. **Compliance:**

- This policy supplements all applicable state and local gift laws, including Texas Penal Code §§36.08-36.10.
- Staff must avoid actions that could imply preferential treatment, ensuring fairness in both practice and perception.

5. **Ethical Procurement Standards Integration**

To uphold the highest professional conduct, Procurement Operations staff will adopt and adhere to the following principles derived from ISM standards, in addition to Texas regulations:

a. **Impartiality & Impropriety Prevention**

Avoid actions/relationships creating actual or perceived unethical conduct. Vendor interactions must demonstrate neutrality, with gift acceptance strictly following Texas' \$50 limit and prohibited items list.

b. **Conflict of Interest Management**

Disclose and eliminate personal/business activities conflicting with HCC's interests. Vendor selection processes shall remain objective, excluding preferential treatment.

c. **Decision-Making Integrity**

Prohibit external influence on procurement judgments. Vendor-sponsored events/communications must comply with transparency requirements¹.

d. **Fiduciary Responsibility**

Exercise due diligence in contract management to maximize institutional value, ensuring all agreements meet HCC's financial and ethical benchmarks.

e. **Supplier Relationship Standards**

Foster fair competition through transparent bidding processes, while requiring vendors to meet HCC's social responsibility and sustainability expectations.

f. **Compliance Framework**

Maintain knowledge of:

- Confidential data protection
- Anti-reciprocity agreements
- Sustainable sourcing practices

g. **Professional Competence**

Pursue continuing education in ethical procurement practices, ensuring decisions reflect current legal standards and industry best practices.

This Guideline applies exclusively to Procurement Operations staff and reinforces HCC's commitment to transparency under Texas Ethics Commission standards. Vendors and staff shall receive updated guidance reflecting these provisions.