Water and Wastewater Operator Certification Program

5 year Strategic Plan - 2019 to 2023

Mission

To ensure protection of public health and the environment through advancing the water and wastewater industry by supporting, recognizing and certifying proficient, ethical, and trained water and wastewater operators in Alberta.

Key Objectives

1. ### Promote Profession - *highlight the certification profession through continual improvement of the guiding principles that govern the certification process, along with increased visibility at events.*

Increased professionalism supports the investment and trust society puts into the profession. Ensuring that the Certification Program stays involved with working groups and committees is extremely important to show commitment from the Government of Alberta (GOA) with this effort. Continually reviewing the Certification Guidelines to make sure that Alberta remains aligned with best practices and model standards will help to keep this profession creditable and reliable.

2. ### Professional Alignment - *continue to ensure synergies with other comparable certifications are explored and highlighted.*

Operators usually have multiple responsibilities especially when working in the municipal sector. It is common for operators to hold multiple qualifications. Alignment of the training and certification requirements, where possible helps operators fulfil their duties and responsibilities in a fiscally responsible manner.

3. ### Change Continuing Education Unit (CEU) Requirements - *identify the need to change the CEU requirement for renewals to meet industry standards across provinces.*

Educational needs and delivery options have changed since 2005 when mandatory CEUs where introduced. To keep up with continually changing technology and the need for certified operators to have hands on knowledge and educational knowledge, the CEU requirements for both obtaining and maintaining certification needs to be re-evaluated on a regular basis and updated to keep up industry standards. This will also allow for operator growth and recognition, as over time, operators knowledge will continually grow.

4. ### Improve CEU Approval Process - *improve CEU application and approval process through database changes along with enhancing the quality of courses being approved.*

Education requirements need to be updated and consolidated to meet both the needs of operators and the system owners to represent what is available presently and what will be available into the future. The implementation of the Operator Portal opens up opportunities for efficiencies. Course providers as well as individual operators depend on efficient approval of education and clear communication of what has already been approved for CEUs.

5. ## Update Certification Retention - *investigate options for replacing inactive certification and implement solution to maintain certification.*

Operators and system owners invest substantial time, effort and finances to achieve and maintain certifications. On the other hand, certification must be current and relevant in order to maintain professionalism. The certification program must find a balance between these two goals in order to support operator retention.

6. ## Develop and Adapt Program Stream - *evaluate and develop certification requirements for facilities/systems such as micro systems and water re-use initiatives. Develop a pathway for operators to get that first year of operating experience.*

The gap between starting work and achieving certification has been an ongoing concern for people wanting to get into the industry. Developing a new process to help with this should be examined to ensure that there continues to be new operators certified to keep up occupation demands.

As management of water resources changes, the operator certification program must adapt. Emerging trends of storm water, treatment, water reuse need to be addressed. Additional new categories of operators for very small (micro) drinking water systems and regional systems that are mostly transmission pipelines need to be considered.

7. ## Streamline Client Services - *improve efficiencies in aspects of the guidelines, exam question bank, database, etc.*

While certification programs are generally administrative, efficient processes and timely responses ensure fairness. It is also important to keep a balance so that these processes remain consistent, reliable and defendable.