



LRWA

LOUISIANA RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION



NRWA

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Training

Commitment

Ambition

INTO

CAREERS in water

Skills



NRWA APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM



APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) is the largest public drinking water and sanitation utility organization representing the interests of more than 31,000 water and wastewater utilities nationwide. NRWA provides products and services to enhance sustainability of the industry plus training, energy audits, certification, financial management, emergency response, disaster relief, environmental compliance, and on-site technical assistance to water and wastewater utilities in order to enhance the public health and safety of their citizens and protect the federal government's investment in water infrastructure.

It takes more than 380,000 highly-skilled water and wastewater personnel working to ensure the public supply of safe drinking water in the United States. Advancements in water treatment and supply technology have increased the skills and training required of this workforce. Water professionals are ultimately responsible for meeting stringent regulatory standards, replacing aging infrastructure, recruiting and training new operations specialists, and responding to and recovering from disasters.

In addition to increasing professional demands, utilities will soon be forced to replace many of their most experienced employees. Between 2010 and 2020, the water sector is expected to lose between 30 and 50 percent of the workforce to retirement. Many of these employees have worked at the same utility for the majority of their careers, and they will depart with decades of valuable institutional knowledge.

Over the next decade, the water sector is expected to

lose between 30 – 50%

of the workforce to retirement



Ceremonial signing of NRWA Apprenticeship Program

Unfortunately, the water industry is not viewed as a career path by most individuals. In 2012, NRWA and State Associations began addressing this challenge by issuing a proclamation declaring the next generation of water professionals be known as **Water and Wastewater System Operations Specialists**.

In 2016, the US Department of Labor (USDOL) asked NRWA to assist in updating the Water and Wastewater Competency Model to better identify specific requirements for workers in the industry. Following this success, USDOL invited NRWA to join the Apprenticeship Accelerator initiative to expand the number of incoming skilled workers. The result was the first National Guideline Standard for the water industry.

In July 2017, NRWA certified its **National Guideline Standards of Apprenticeship** for Water and Wastewater Operation Specialists through USDOL and held a ceremonial signing in conjunction with Apprenticeship Week that following November.

“To grow and prosper, every rural community needs job opportunities for its residents, and employers need qualified individuals to fill those needs. There are many opportunities to... grow apprenticeship opportunities to develop the required workforce.”

- Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The NRWA Apprenticeship Program is tailored to transfer a wealth of experience and knowledge from industry experts to the next generation of system operation specialists. Individuals accepted into the program will receive both on-the-job training and technical instruction while being employed by sponsoring utility systems.

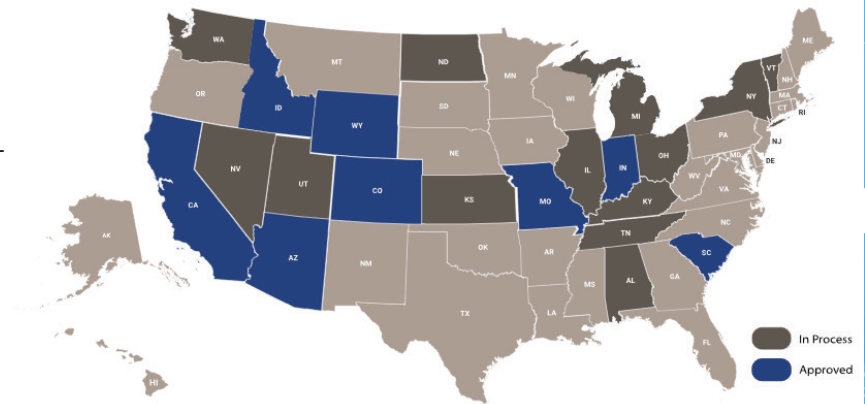
State Associations will train system operations specialists through all phases of the industry. Related instruction will cover safety, professional requirements, operations and maintenance, operator mathematics, security and emergency response, laws and regulations, utility management and construction projects. Systems will provide hands-on experience with tools, equipment and workplace safety, vehicles and heavy equipment, system operations and maintenance, quality control and logistics, reports and supervision.



Program Requirements:

- 4,000 hours of on-the-job training
- 288 hours of related instruction
- Periodic worksite checks
- Documented onsite work hours
- Expert State Association mentoring

Apprentices successfully completing the program will receive a nationally-recognized credential signed by US Secretary of Labor. Over time, the program will become the industry standard for producing well-qualified, fully proficient water professionals.



Registered State Apprenticeship Programs (as of April 2018)

NEXT STEPS

NRWA will continue working with State Associations to foster and register new apprenticeship programs. Currently, NRWA is developing several online modules and program tracking to help states implement their programs.

NRWA is also examining the future prospects of college internships and high school mentoring programs to include in its workforce development mission.

With oversight by a National Apprenticeship Training Committee, this apprenticeship program is part of NRWA's organizational goals of a long-term effort to build professionalism and greater value within the water industry and provide a pipeline of skilled workers.



Alliance of Indiana Rural Water launches Apprenticeship Program

SUPPORT Rural Workforce

NRWA and State Associations have dedicated significant time and financial resources to develop National Guideline Standards of Apprenticeship on behalf of over 50,000 water and wastewater utility systems in the United States. After learning of this effort, NRWA's corporate sponsor CoBank committed to underwrite \$250,000 to help establish the program. CoBank is a cooperative bank serving agribusinesses, rural infrastructure providers and Farm Credit associations throughout the country. This public-private partnership led to the creation of the **Water Industry Advancement and Sustainability Institute (WIASI)**, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the professionalism of the workforce through innovative partnerships.



Organizations can support the NRWA Apprenticeship Program through contributions to WIASI, by assisting in the development of online training curriculum, and by supporting State Associations in delivering related instruction.

Registered apprenticeship programs are a proven method to **connect veterans to careers** in their home communities. Veterans are talented individuals that are ready and willing to go to work in rural America, but are too often unaware of the programs available to them. NRWA and State Associations have a core belief that veterans are a top priority and are committed to working across federal agencies to maximize the potential of America's servicemen and women.

NRWA has always placed top priority on quality workforce training and will continue to advance the professionalism within the water industry. We envision that the NRWA Apprenticeship Program will ensure a skilled workforce to protect the health and environment of small communities, strengthen system sustainability and cultivate rural prosperity.