

Operations Scholarship Frequently Asked Questions

WEF is pleased to support operator training with an Operations Scholarship. The purpose is to provide funding for individuals who are seeking water sector operator education, training, or certification to enter the industry or to advance their knowledge, skills, abilities, or license. Eligible individuals must be 1) seeking an entry-level operator's license; or 2) a licensed entry-level or above operator seeking professional development. The amount of funding will be equal to the cost of the education or training, up to \$5,000. The application MUST include cost documentation from an education or training organization. The application period is January 15 through March 31, annually.

What are the Application Requirements?

1. Name
2. Address
3. E-mail
4. Ethnicity
5. Gender
6. WEF Membership Number
7. Member Association Name
8. Current employer
9. Amount Requested
10. Cost documentation from education or training organization
11. Purpose/Objective of scholarship funding request – 500-word limit
12. Essay on one of the following (500-word limit)
 - a. Why did you select this career?
 - b. How do you want to contribute to the field/industry?
 - c. What are your career goals?
13. Any additional information you would like to share with the selection committee? Ex: Resume, memberships, affiliations, certifications, etc.

*Application must be submitted through Open Water.

I am new to the water sector; how do I begin?

The water sector is a great place to be. A job in water provides a stable career with good benefits as well as a chance to preserve our most important resource while protecting public health. Entry level positions often require a high school diploma and can provide the experience and training you need to get certified. States each have specific certification requirements. College and vocational schools across the country also provide certificates or degrees in water technology, which can help kickstart your career. For information on certification in your state, as well as career and technical education programs near you, visit your state page on WorkforWater.org in the Get Started section. Also, try contacting your local utilities to see if they have apprenticeship or operator-in-training programs for those new to the sector. These programs are often perfect ways to get the initial on-the-job experience as well as training for your certification.

I currently work in operations and want to further develop my career in field, but I'm not sure where to start?

Start by looking at the [Operator resources](#) provided by WEF. If you have not already gone through the [Wastewater Treatment Fundamentals](#) series, those are great training tools.

Browse through the Get Started resources for your state and surrounding region on [WorkforWater.org](#). Your local [member association\(s\)](#) (MA) may also provide trainings and tools as well as annual meetings or conferences that would be of interest.

As the largest annual water conference, [WEFTEC](#) is another great event to consider, with more than 100 technical sessions and close to 1000 exhibitors, it's perfect for education and networking as well as getting your education credits.

My employer pays or reimburses my current training and/or recertification needs, may I still apply for those purposes?

We would like to ensure that these funds are used for the people who will benefit most. If your employer will cover your training expenses, please do not apply for funds for those programs. If there are professional development needs that will help advance your career in operations which your employer will not cover, you may apply for the scholarship for those funds.

May I use the scholarship toward a bachelor's or master's degree?

The scholarship is intended to help progress your career specifically in water and water resource recovery operations. If your degree is directly related to advancement in the water sector, you may apply for the funds. Examples of accepted college programs are Water Technology to enter or advance in the sector. Funds cannot be used for degree programs in other sectors. For example, a degree in English Literature or Psychology would not be appropriate.

Could I use the scholarship toward attending a training?

Yes, please provide adequate justification for how this training will help to advance your career in your application. Also, remember to break out any fees, required resources, and/or associated travel costs as separated lines in your cost documentation.

Could I use the scholarship toward attending a conference?

If the conference has specific application toward you obtaining or maintaining a certification in operations, such as providing required Continuing Education Credits or providing specific training sessions for operators, then conferences will be considered. Conference attendance for networking or general professional development will not be considered. Please make sure to outline the reasons for conference attendance and how it will help you enter or advance your career in operations in your application.

Could the scholarship cover travel expenses?

Yes, you can include directly related travel expenses in the cost documentation. An example would be hotel and airfare to travel to a training. Please break out each expense in your cost documentation.

What information should I include in the required written material?

We highly recommend a clear description of how the training, certification, resource, or program will directly serve to advance your career within water resource recovery operations. If there are multiple costs associated with your funds request, such as program fees, books/resource fee, travel costs, etc., please make sure to outline the cost of each item in your cost documentation. Including any affiliation you currently have with WEF, your MA or other water or environmental programs (Operations Challenge, InFLOW, committee activity, volunteering, etc.) will also help to strengthen your application.

How are the applications reviewed?

A committee WEF Volunteers and Staff review the applications and award funds based on applicability and need. Points are assigned to the application contents as follows:

- Clear and Concise Application - 10 points
- Clarity & Relevance of Objective/Purpose Funding Request (First 500-word essay and Cost Documentation) – 30 points
- Impact of Second 500-word essay – 25 points
- Additional supporting information (Ex: Resume, Memberships, Affiliations, Certifications) – 5 points
- Committee Member Discretion – 25 points
- Bonus – 5 points

I am a member of my state water environment association, do I need to be a member of WEF as well?

To be eligible for the scholarship you must be a current member of the Water Environment Association and your state water environment association. **If you are new to the industry and therefore not a current member of WEF, you can include your WEF Membership dues as part of your funds request**, however you must state that in your application and cost documentation.

I forgot my WEF member information and/or am not sure if I am a current WEF Member, how do I find that information?

You can call WEF Customer Service at 1.800.666.0206 or email at csc@wef.org and they can provide you your WEF Member number and current membership status.

I am interested in applying but am not a current WEF Member?

Find out more about WEF Membership on our website, www.wef.org/JoinWEF. Depending on your qualifications you will likely want a [Professional Operator](#) or [Student](#) membership. You can either join [online](#) or call WEF customer service at 1.800.666.0206.

Can I apply to be reimbursed for training I've already started or completed?

Funds may be applied to any training or certification that began after January 1, 2024. Funds should be applied toward a training or certification started no later than December 31, 2025.

What is the timeline for the scholarship after I apply?

The scholarship application deadline is March 31, 2024. Applicants will be notified of their award by mid-May. Funds will be distributed as soon as June 1, or as soon as paperwork is submitted. Awardee should plan to use the funds within 12 months of receiving the funds.

I am a past recipient of the scholarship, am I eligible to apply again?

Preference is given to deserving first time applicants. However, if funds remain after the first time applicants have been reviewed, past recipients will be considered.

I have additional questions, who should I contact?

Please contact the WEF Awards Program at Awards@wef.org, with any additional questions you may have.

WEF Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) maintains diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) as core principles of our organization’s mission. Our members, Board of Trustees (BOT), volunteer leaders, and staff together and individually share responsibility to uphold these principles.

We are committed to creating an organization that acknowledges and celebrates our unique differences including education, career background, age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ability status, accent, socioeconomic status, cultural heritage and religion, parental status, marital status, veteran, personality type, political perspective, and all other characteristics of DE&I.

For more information on WEF’s DE&I Initiatives, please visit [WEF’s DE&I Resource page](#).

Example Cost Documentation 1:

Item	Cost	Link
Wastewater Treatment Fundamentals I – Online Course and Exam	\$99	https://learn.wef.org/local/catalog/view/product.php?productid=15
The Wastewater Operator's Guide to Preparing for the Certification Examination	\$83.99	https://connect.wef.org/s/store#/store/browse/detail/a2n1S000000KVldQAG
Operation of Water Resource Recovery	\$83.99	https://connect.wef.org/s/store#/store/browse/detail/a2n1S000000KVk5QAG

Facilities Study Guide		
Total	\$266.98	

Example Cost Documentation 2 (someone new to the industry):

Item	Cost	Link
Rocky Mountain Water and Wastewater Fundamentals School	\$450*	https://www.rmwea.org/fundamentals_school.php
Course Book	\$99*	
Hotel (\$159 x 5 nights)	\$795*	
Transportation	\$250	
Meals (@\$50 per day)	\$250	
WEF and RMWEA Professional Operator Membership	\$115 (\$75 WEF + \$40 RMWEA Dues)	https://www.wef.org/membership--community/membership-center/professional-memberships/
Total	\$1959	

*Based on RMWEA 2023 Operator School Pricing