**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Applications Open for Utility of the Future Today Recognition Program**

*Global program enters second year of celebrating excellent performance
and innovative and sustainable utility management practices*

***Application deadline is June 9***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The application period is open for the *Utility of the Future Today* Recognition Program, which returns for a second year to bring attention to water resource recovery facilities implementing the innovative Utility of the Future business model.

The program seeks to promote and recognize utilities that are building on a foundation of excellent management and help small, medium, and large utilities transform their operations over time.

“The innovations coming to the water sector present an opportunity for a shift in the way utilities think about and solve long-standing challenges,” said WEF Executive Director Eileen O’Neill. “WEF and the other partners are excited to recognize and salute those utilities that are embracing innovative ways to better serve their communities.”

The Utility of the Future activity areas focus on the key building blocks of this transformation:

* recovery and new uses of a full range of resources;
* engagement as a leader in the full water cycle and broader social, economic, and environmental sustainability of the community;
* transformation of the internal utility culture in support of these innovations; and
* engagement in the community and formation of partnerships necessary for success when operating outside of the traditional span of control of the utility.

Public and private water resource recovery facilities of all sizes are encouraged to apply by **5 p.m. EDT, June 9, 2017**. Applicants must have no major permit violations in the past year prior to the submission date of their applications. Honorees will be notified by July 28 and formally recognized during an awards ceremony at WEFTEC 2017—WEF’s 90th annual technical exhibition and conference—this October in Chicago.

“EPA is proud to support and provide advice for the Utility of the Future Today Recognition Program and we commend our association colleagues for their leadership,” said James Horne, Sustainability Program Manager, Office of Wastewater Management at EPA.  “The program recognizes a range of utilities that have truly embraced the future as 21st century service providers and it also aligns with EPA's priorities to promote sustainability across the water sector.”

Two informative webinars are scheduled for utilities wishing to learn more about the program and the application process. The webinars will provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions with Recognition Program partners. They are scheduled from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. on [April 12](https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/222885682090297602) and [May 3](https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2798543347202137090).

Since the Utility of the Future concept was introduced in 2013, many utilities have successfully implemented new and creative programs to address local wastewater technical and community challenges. The recognition program was launched last year by four water sector organizations—the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), the Water Environment Federation (WEF), the Water Environment & Reuse Foundation (WE&RF) and WateReuse—with input from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The recognition program’s first 61 honorees were featured during WEFTEC 2016 in New Orleans.

To learn more, visit <http://www.wef.org/UtilityoftheFuture> or contact UtilityRecognition@wef.org.

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**About WEF**

The Water Environment Federation is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 33,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. Since 1928, WEF and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water sector leader, our mission is to connect water professionals; enrich the expertise of water professionals; increase the awareness of the impact and value of water; and provide a platform for water sector innovation. To learn more, visit [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org/).

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**About NACWA**

The National Association of Clean Water Agencies is the leading advocate for responsible national policies that advance clean water.  NACWA represents the collective interests of America's clean water utilities nationwide – and their clear commitment to America’s waters.  For over 45 years, NACWA has been the clean water community’s voice in Congress, at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies, as well as in the media and in the courts. To learn more about NACWA visit us at [www.nacwa.org](http://www.nacwa.org).

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**About WE&RF**

The Water Environment & Reuse Foundation (WE&RF) is a nonprofit (501c3) organization officially formed in July 2016 as the result of the merger of Water Environment Research Foundation and the WateReuse Research Foundation. The merged research foundation, with a combined research portfolio representing over $200 million, conducts research to treat and recover beneficial materials from wastewater, stormwater, and seawater including water, nutrients, energy, and biosolids. To learn more, visit [www.werf.org](http://www.werf.org).

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**About WateReuse**

WateReuse is an international thought-leader on alternative water supply development and the global go-to source for applied research, education, and advocacy on water reuse. Representing a coalition that includes utilities, government agencies, and industry; WateReuse works to educate policymakers and the public on the science, economic value, and environmental benefits of treating water to safely use it for designated purposes, such as irrigation, manufacturing, and drinking. To learn more, visit [www.watereuse.org](http://www.watereuse.org).

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