



Operator Scholarship Frequently Asked Questions

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is pleased to support operator training with the Operator 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.

General Information

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. 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.

Application Requirements and Scoring

What are the Application Requirements?

1. Name*
2. Address*
3. E-mail*
4. LinkedIn Profile

5. Ethnicity
6. Gender
7. Do you currently work in the water sector? *
8. WEF Membership Number*
9. Member Association Name*
10. Current Employer*
11. Are you a past recipient of the WEF Operator Scholarship? *
12. Total Amount Requested (USD)*
13. Purpose/Objective of scholarship funding request (150-word Limit) *
14. Breakdown of Funds*
 - a. Item Cost
 - b. Item Description
 - c. Item Verification
15. Essay: What are your career goals and how will this scholarship help you meet them? (500-word limit) *
16. Any additional information you would like to share with the selection committee? Ex: Resume, memberships, affiliations, certifications, etc.

*Required section

What information should I be sure to include in the required written material?

You will need to fill out all the required information to submit your application. Be sure to include in your essay 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 each item in your Breakdown of Funds. In the Additional Information, you can include your resume, and any licenses and certifications you hold. You will also strengthen your application by including any affiliation you currently have with WEF, your WEF Member Association, and/or other water or environmental programs (Operations Challenge, InFLOW, WEF Community activity, volunteering, etc.)

How are the applications reviewed?

A Focus Group of 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 and Breakdown of Funds – 30 points
- Impact of 500-word essay – 25 points
- Additional supporting information (Ex: Resume, Memberships, Affiliations, Certifications) – 5 points
- Committee Member Discretion – 25 points
- Bonus – 5 points

What is the timeline for the scholarship after I apply?

The scholarship application deadline is March 31. Applicants will be notified of their award by early July. Funds will be distributed two to three weeks after notification emails are sent, or as

soon as paperwork is submitted. Awardee should plan to use the funds within 12 months of receiving the funds.

Eligible Expenses

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

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 expenses which they will reimburse. 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, Water Sciences, Water/Wastewater Resources, or similar programs. 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 breakdown of funds.

Could I use the scholarship to attend 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 travel expenses directly related to the training or education program you are applying for funds to cover. Make sure to detail these expenses in your cost documentation. An example would be hotel and airfare to travel to a training. Please break out each expense in your breakdown of funds.

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 of the scholarship year.

Are there any non-eligible expenses?

The Scholarship is intentionally open as training needs can vary greatly across people and locations. The only requests that will not be considered are general living expenses such as rent,

car payments, groceries, laptops, etc. All other requests need to be clearly defined, accounted for, and relate to advancement in operations in water sector and are considered at the discretion of the Operator Scholarship Focus Group.

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.

Water Environment Federation (WEF) Membership

Do I need to be a current member of the WE to be eligible?

If you have worked in the water industry for more than 12 months, you need to be a current member of WEF. If you have worked in the water industry for more than 12 months and are not a current WEF member, your application will be removed from consideration.

If you are brand new to the water industry or have worked in the sector for less than 12 months, and are awarded the scholarship, a 1-year membership to WEF and your selected WEF Member Association will be included as part of your award.

I am a member of my state/local water environment association (WEF Member 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 Federation and if you reside in the United States or Canada, your state/local water environment association (WEF Member Association.)

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.

Breakdown of Funds

How do I justify my Total amount requested?

You are required to provide documentation and verification for all the funds you are requesting in the Breakdown of funds section of the application. If the sum of all the fields in the breakdown of funds does not equal the total amount requested, your application may not be considered.

Do I need to upload a funds Verification?

Yes, you must have support for all the funds you are requesting. You can group request by category; however not all categories need to have funds associated with them. Any category that has funds associated with it will need to have a file uploaded for verification.

What can I upload as Verification?

You can upload any type of file as your verification. The type of file will depend on the submission. For example, if you are requesting funds for a semester of a technical or educational program, you might upload a PDF of an invoice for a semester. If you are requesting several books, you might make a table or excel file that has the name of each book, the price, and a link to the product. If you are requesting traveling to a training, you would need to upload a file that links to the training pricing, this could be a word document with a web link. And you would also need to upload travel cost documentation, which could be a table or excel file that breaks out airfare, hotel, and meal expenses. See examples below. If you are unsure of what verification to provide, please email awards@wef.org for assistance.

Example Breakdown of Funds

Example of Course

Course Cost: 3504

Course Description: Tuition and fees for 2 semesters in Environmental Technician Program at Mohawk College

Course Verification: upload PDF of tuition invoice or word doc containing weblink to program.

Example of License and/or Exam Fee

License and/or Exam Fee Cost: 308

License and/or Exam Fee Description: Colorado Industrial Wastewater C and B License and Test Fees

License and/or Exam Fee Verification: upload below as a table in word or PDF or excel file

Colorado Certification Registration Fee Industrial Wastewater C	\$50
PSI Testing Fee Industrial Wastewater C	\$104
Colorado Certification Registration Fee Industrial Wastewater B	\$50
PSI Testing Fee Industrial Wastewater B	\$104

Example of Registration and Travel

Registration Fees Cost: 500

Registration Fees Description: Rocky Mountain Water Environment Federation Wastewater Fundamentals Operator School

Registration Fees Verification: upload below as a table in word or PDF or excel file

Item	Cost	Link
Rocky Mountain Wastewater Fundamentals School	\$500	https://www.rmwea.org/operator_schools.php

Travel Fees Cost: 1045

Travel Fees Description: Hotel, Transportation and Meals for Rocky Mountain Wastewater Fundamentals School

Travel Fees Verification: upload below as a table in word or PDF or excel file

Item	Cost	Link
Hotel (\$109 x 5 nights)	\$545	
Transportation	\$250	
Meals (@\$50 per day)	\$250	
Total	\$1045	

Example of Books/Study Materials

Book(s)/Study Material(s) Cost: 266.98

Book(s)/Study Material(s) Description: Books from the Water Environment Federation

Book(s)/Study Material(s) Verification: upload below as a table in word or PDF or excel file

Item	Cost	Link
Wastewater Treatment Fundamentals I – Online Course and Exam	\$99	https://learn.wef.org/local/catalog/view/product.php?productid=222
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 Facilities Study Guide	\$83.99	https://connect.wef.org/s/store#/store/browse/detail/a2n1S000000KVk5QAG
Total	\$266.98	

Additional Questions

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.