



The Employer's Guide to the WEF's Water Leadership Institute

My employee wants to enroll in the Water Leadership Institute (WLI). What is it?

The [WLI program](#) is aimed at educating, training, and providing opportunities that enable developing and emerging leaders to build strong lasting relationships within the water industry. This intensive program allows participants the opportunity to engage in management training and leadership development through a blended learning approach that includes the examination of complex challenges facing the water and wastewater industries and networking with public and private sector practitioners. Participants will build skills and knowledge needed to affect change within their organizations. Participation in this program is determined by a competitive application process.

What are the time commitments?

While there is no maximum amount of time that an individual may want to contribute, there are minimum expectations.

WLI is comprised of two in-person events, six large-group webcasts, monthly group chats, and weekly final project meetings. It is expected that participants will spend a minimum of 6-8 hours a month on WLI-related activities excluding the in-person events. In more detail, monthly webcasts and group chats are 2.25 hours a month, and the rest of the time includes pre-work and final project work. Each final project group sets up recurring meetings at their own discretion. In 2026, the in-person events consist of a 2-day workshop in Arlington, VA on May 5-6 with an optional half day on May 4th and a full-day workshop at WEFTEC 2026 in New Orleans, Sept. 27

Is travel involved?

Yes! There are two travel requirements for program participants. It is expected that all those enrolled be able to attend these two events.

The first travel requirement is the Face-to-Face event which is held in the Arlington, VA May 5-6. This is a two-day intensive boot camp that will serve as a launch point into the WLI programming.

The second travel requirement is for the program wrap-up and graduation ceremony, which is hosted at WEFTEC 2026 in New Orleans on September 27th. We encourage participants to stay for the entire five-day duration of WEFTEC as the registration is covered in the tuition costs for the program.



What costs will we incur?

The costs you will incur are for the following:

- Travel-related expenses (airfare, transportation, parking, luggage, meals, lodging, etc.).
- Tuition: \$1,235. This fee includes a full conference registration to WEFTEC (a \$840 value), access to 6 live webcasts (a \$240 value), and the two-day workshop in Arlington (a \$400 value). In addition, it includes monthly group chats, homework assignments, and putting together the final project.
- A pre-course assessment or book (\$25).
- Salary costs for employees during work hours for participation

Is there funding support?

Yes, there are limited scholarship opportunities. The George S. Hawkins scholarship will be given annually to 1 participant in the Water Leadership Institute covering the full tuition price. This scholarship is awarded to someone that highlights George's commitment to developing future water sector leaders.

The WEF Board has approved additional funds which will allow us to offer additional scholarships this year. These scholarships cover part or all of the tuition cost and are need based. Funds will be allocated at the same time participants learn they are accepted to the program. The amount will be deducted directly from the tuition invoice. The total amount of funds available in 2026 is a max of 6 full scholarships, but is often portioned out in partial scholarships to those in need.

To apply for the scholarship, you just need to answer the questions included in the WLI application. There is no need to submit a second document. Scholarships will be evaluated after the deadline for application submission has passed.