

Leadership and Management Fundamentals: Operator Course (May 7 – June 25, 2026)

Leadership and Management Fundamentals for Wastewater Treatment is for operators who are either looking to advance in the future or recently advanced to a management position. This course provides students with an overview of the non-technical skills to successfully advance in the water industry, including classes on leadership, management, communication, and finance.

The course is designed for working professionals. Courses are taught by water professionals, including operators, and will be live streamed via Zoom. Class recordings will be posted after class, allowing working operators, around the world, to begin to bridge the gaps between supervision, management, and leadership.

Testimonial:

"As a newer operator, I felt that this course laid a great foundation for what areas to focus on when growing my career, as well as illuminating skills and protocols that I can fall back on when a tough decision or difficult situation arises at my plant. I recommend this course, as the course delves into several critical areas of study that are helpful when navigating planning, decision making, and interpersonal dynamics that are found at water and wastewater plants."

-Jamie Akens, Plant Operator, Metro Water Recovery

OBJECTIVES

- Provide students with a solid foundation of leadership and management concepts to launch their leadership journey.
- Encourage a diverse pool of operators to bridge the gap and transition to supervisory, management, and leadership positions in the water profession.
- Through the coursework, learn to manage yourself, lead and manage diverse teams, and through successful experiences, advance to water leadership positions.

SPEAKERS

Caeleb Butler, Duck Creek Plant Manager, City of Garland, TX

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Shea Dunifon, Water Communications Professional, Jacksonville, FL

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Kerrie Greenfelder, Engineering Director, Water, Burns & McDonnell, Kansas City, MO

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Shawn Heselton, Director of Interceptor Operations – South Shore

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Joy Kotey, Edmond, OK

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Mike Kyle, Retired Executive Director, Lancaster Area Sewer Authority, PA

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Joe Navas, Senior Project Manager, McCarthy Building Companies, NV

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Dan O'Sullivan, Operations Shift Superintendent Sewage Treatment, Buffalo Sewer Authority, NY

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Brian Persing, Senior O&M Consultant, Brown and Caldwell, NY

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Laura Rieck, CWP, Water Treatment Operator, Durango, Colorado

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Justin Roush, Director, Masters of Science in Utilities Management, Xavier University

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Stacy Thompson, Deputy Director, Saco, Maine, WRRD

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Amber Williams, Wastewater O&M Tech, Piscataway WRRF, MD

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CLASS MEETS: ZOOM:

THURSDAYS 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

MAY 7 – JUNE 25

READINGS AND RESOURCES

The readings and resource links are in the course portal on the WEF Learning Center, available for all registrants. Please, if you have a chance, read/review before the classes. Readings are subject to change prior to May 7.

SCHEDULE AND TOPICS

1. Thursday, May 7, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 PM ET | Course Introduction & Basics of Leadership & Time Management

Speakers: Joy Kotey and Brian Persing

Reading:

The Effective Water Professional: Leadership, Communications, Management, Finance & Governance. Water Environment Federation. 2015. **Chapter 2: Leadership.**

2. Thursday, May 14, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 PM ET | Emotional Intelligence and Leveraging Different Communication Styles

Speakers: Kerrie Greenfelder and Joe Navas

Assignment: Complete the CliftonStrengths Top 5 Strength Based Leadership Assessment – Details to be provided prior to class.

Readings:

1. Greenfelder, Kerrie. **“Operator Essentials: What Every Operator Needs to Know About Emotional Intelligence.”** *Water Environment & Technology.* March 2026.

The Effective Water Professional: Leadership, Communications, Management, Finance & Governance. Water Environment Federation. 2015. Chapter 4. Management, **Sec 5.6 A Few Words about Behavior and Personalities, p. 153-155.**

3. **Thursday, May 21, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 PM ET | Are You Ready to be a Supervisor?**

Speakers: Dan O’Sullivan and Stacy Thompson

Readings:

1. Kyle, Mike. "**Operator Essentials: What Every Operator Needs to Know About Being a Good Supervisor.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. August 2024.
2. Thompson, Stacy and Crandall, Stacie. "**Operator Essentials: What Every Operator Needs to Know About Leadership and People Management.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. December 2023.
3. Ferrari, Pete. "**Operator Essentials: What Every Operator Needs to Know About Being a Good Maintenance Supervisor.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. June 2025.

4. **Thursday, May 28, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 PM ET | Bridging Perspectives**

Speakers: Shawn Heselton and Amber Williams

Readings and Resources:

1. Jacques, Justin. "**Special Section: Workforce**" *Water Environment & Technology*. May 2022.
2. Kane, Joseph and Tomer, Adie. *Renewing the Water Workforce: Improving water infrastructure and creating a pipeline to opportunity*. Brookings Institution: Metropolitan Policy Program July 2018. **Executive Summary.**

5. **Thursday, June 4, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 ET | Public Communication & Engagement**

Speakers: Shea Dunifon and Laura Rieck

Readings and Resources:

1. Dunifon, Shea and Diehl, Cody. "**Operator Essentials: What Every Operator Needs to Know About Giving Public Tours.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. April 2023.
2. Dunifon, Shea and Diehl, Cody. "**Operator Essentials: What Every Operator Needs to Know About Safety and Security While Giving Public Tours.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. April 2024
3. *The Effective Water Professional: Leadership, Communications, Management, Finance & Governance*. Water Environment Federation. 2015. **Chapter 3: Communication, Section 1.0-3.0, P.30-49.**
4. *Wastewater Treatment Fundamentals III: Advanced Treatment*. Water Environment Federation. 2022. **Chapter 14: Leadership and Management. P.559-563, Customer Service and Public Engagement.**

5. **Media Links to Browse**

Alexandria Renew: [Education Center | AlexRenew](#)

King County, Washington: [About Wastewater Treatment – King County](#)

Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District: [Home Page - Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District](#)

6. **Thursday, June 11, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 PM ET | Strategic and Tactical Planning and Decision Making**

Speakers: Stacy Thompson and Caeleb Butler

Readings:

1. Kyle, Mike. "**What Every Operator Needs to Know About Problem-Solving and Decision-Making on the Job.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. August 2023.
2. *The Effective Water Professional: Leadership, Communications, Management, Finance & Governance*. Water Environment Federation. 2015. **Chapter 4: Management.**

7. **Thursday, June 18, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 PM ET | Finance Basics**

Speaker: Mike Kyle

Readings:

1. *The Effective Water Professional: Leadership, Communications, Management, Finance & Governance*. Water Environment Federation. 2015. **Chapter 5: Utility Finance.**
2. Kyle, Michael, and Foster, Joe. "**Operator Essentials: What Every Operators Needs to Know About Budgeting.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. February 2021.
3. Kyle, Michael. "**Operator Essentials: What Every Operators Needs to Know About Financing and Funding.**" *Water Environment & Technology*. May 2023.
4. *Wastewater Treatment Fundamentals III: Advanced Treatment*. Water Environment Federation. 2022. **Chapter 14: Leadership and Management. P.531-536, Budgeting and Financial Management and P.542-546, Capital Improvements and Projects.**

8. **Thursday, June 25, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 ET | Ethics & Class Wrap-Up**

Speakers: Justin Roush and Christopher Myrben

MENTOR

Leadership and Management Fundamentals for Wastewater Treatment includes eight virtual classes broadly covering leadership, management, supervision communication, finance, and ethics, topics like those covered in more detail in the WEF Water Leadership Institute (WLI) program. WLI alums are uniquely situated to serve as 'mentors' during the course and in the three months following the series for operators interested in having a trusted advisor and mentor sounding board as part of the experience of this program.

Benefits to both include networking, sharing knowledge and experiences to benefit and grow the water sector, encourage inclusion and the opportunity to integrate operations, engineers, communicators, and others in personal and unique way.

Please fill out the [Mentor Request Form](#) by Thursday, May 7, 2026, to be paired with a mentor as part of the learning experience. If you have questions, contact Jessica Rozek, jrozek@wef.org.

ADVANCE YOUR LEARNING WITH THESE NEXT STEPS

- **Integrated Leadership Webcast Series, WEF**
The Integrated Leadership Webcast Series is an online course for anyone looking to improve their leadership skills while connecting with professionals in the water industry. For more information, go to www.wef.org/ilws or contact: LeadershipSeries@wef.org
- **Water Leadership Institute, WEF**
The Water leadership Institute program is aimed at educating, training, and providing opportunities that enable developing and emerging leaders to build strong lasting relationships within the water industry. For more information, go to www.wef.org/wli or contact: WLI@wef.org
- **Water Utility Management Master's Degree, Xavier University**
Developed with guidance from leaders across the water sector, including WEF, this graduate program fills a longstanding gap in workforce development by blending business leadership with the technical and operational realities of today's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities. Learn to navigate regulatory environments, aging infrastructure, cybersecurity demands, modernization initiatives, rate-setting pressures, and community expectations. The program equips rising professionals with MBA-level business acumen and the specialized expertise utilities rely on every day. For more information visit: www.xavier.edu/water-utilities-management
- **Water Engineering & Management Certificate or Masters, University of Colorado:**
The WE&M certificate is another step to develop leadership, management, communication, and finance skills in the water profession. This program expands on the

learning offered in *Leadership and Management Fundamentals for Wastewater Treatment*. For more information, contact: Richard.d.kuchenrither@colorado.edu