

Water Workforce



Purpose and Background of the Water Workforce Action Plan

The Water Workforce Action Plan (WWAP) was developed through a multi-agency collaborative effort in conjunction with the 2025 Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan (OCWP). Oklahoma's water workforce helps ensure communities have safe drinking water and other vital water services that protect public health throughout the state. This sector is currently facing challenges regarding the recruitment, training, and retention of employees. One-third of water and wastewater operators in the United States (U.S.) will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years (U.S. EPA, 2020), and more specialized training is required for industry roles with the emergence of advanced treatment technologies.

The overarching goal of the WWAP is to identify and remove barriers that prolong the critical and unprecedented staff shortage in the water workforce.

Workgroup members included representatives from:

- City of Enid
- City of Norman
- City of Oklahoma City
- Hughes Rural Water District #6
- Midwest City Public Works
- Oklahoma Rural Water Association
- Oklahoma Water Resources Board
- Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
- Oklahoma Municipal League
- City of Tulsa Department of Water and Sewer

The Water Workforce Workgroup was established in 2022 and met five times through 2025. Three strategy areas were identified as the fundamental basis for the successful growth of the water workforce in Oklahoma: Attracting New Workers (A); Retaining Existing Workers (R); and Developing the Workforce (D).

The following eight actions were identified as implementation priorities:

- **A-01:** Develop Water Profession Factsheet(s)
- **A-10:** Participation in a local event or celebration
- **A-11:** Develop & Distribute K-12 Water Curriculum
- **D-01:** Gather & Compile Oklahoma Water Workforce Information
- **D-04:** Connect with the Oklahoma Workforce Commission.
- **D-05:** Develop a Water Workforce Coalition.
- **D-06:** Declare a "Water Sector Professional Career Day."
- **R-04:** Develop Operator Training Course

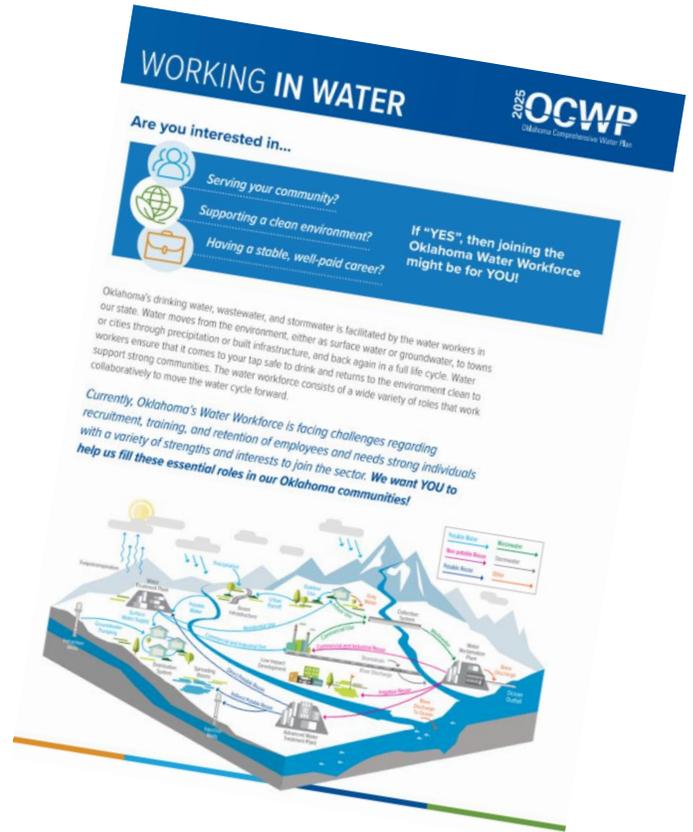
As part of the OCWP Water Infrastructure and Workforce recommendation, it is recommended that the Water Workforce Workgroup continue and coordinate implementation of identified priority actions as funding is available.

Are you interested in...

- Serving your community?
- Supporting a clean environment?
- Having a stable, well-paid career?

If “YES,” then joining the Oklahoma Water Workforce might be for You!

As part of priority action **A-01**, the workgroup developed the “**Working in Water**” brochure designed for use by water stakeholders to attract new workers to the water industry. The brochure briefly describes a variety of water professions, typical qualifications, and average salary.



Water is for Your Classroom, Too!

As part of priority action **A-11**, the workgroup developed the “**Water is for Your Classroom, Too!**” brochure as a quick-start resource guide for integrating water curriculum into the K-12 classroom. This brochure includes brief descriptions and links to six classroom activities that allow students to explore the water cycle, treatment, and distribution aspects of the water industry.



Read the **Water Workforce Action Plan – Executive Summary**.