



DWRLF – Operator Certification (Set-Aside)

The result of reducing staff or funding of this activity would be reducing the assistance to the DHH-OPH CEHS Safe Drinking Water Program (SDWP), operator certification section. This could lead to fewer certified operators which results in more compliance problems for drinking water systems. Compliance problems lead to water contamination which could lead to illness and disease in humans consuming it as well as increased costs to the government providing emergency water delivery and medical services and enforcement initiatives. If funding was increased, the DWRLF could expand operator certification program. Note: Operator Certification is mandated by EPA. If not implemented, the 20% of the Capitalization Grant for the State Revolving Fund is withheld by EPA.

Objective

Optimize the dollars available from the US EPA State Revolving Fund Capitalization Grant for assistance to water initiatives in Louisiana. This can be accomplished by providing assistance directly through the loan program or set-aside programs. Any dollars used for the set-aside programs are not available for loans for infrastructure, consequently, coordination between programs is necessary to maximize the dollars and accomplish the goals of public health protection, source water protection, and financial assistance.

Narrative

The Safe Drinking Water Act provides each state with flexibility to determine how much of their capitalization grant should be used for infrastructure loans and set-aside activities. However, with this flexibility comes responsibility to determine how to best direct funds to address the problems in our state. We believe it is critical to evaluate and understand the impact of our decisions in order to ensure that assistance will be available in the future. There is a direct relationship between set-aside funding and the long-term loan capacity of the DWRLF. This impact is significant and might suggest that we should limit our set-aside use. Many of the activities conducted under the set-asides can have a direct impact on preventing future problems in the public water systems.

Operator Certification is a mandated initiative by EPA as a condition of the State Revolving Fund Capitalization Grant. Each state must implement an Operator Certification Program or 20% of the grant is withheld.

DWRLF has partnered with other programs within DHH to fund initiatives that protect humans' drinking water. The initiatives of the Operator Certification program contribute exponentially to increasing compliance among public water systems, which can also reduce the need for costly infrastructure improvements. We evaluate our use of set-asides for this initiative on an annual basis as we develop the Intended Use Plan to determine whether set-asides levels should be reduced or increased.

Better Health

Drinking water is necessary to sustain human life. There are no demographic boundaries—every human needs safe drinking water for survival.

The direct customers of the Operator Certification set-aside is the operator certification program within the OPH Safe Drinking Water Program. Our financial assistance to this program enhances its ability to accomplish its goals.

How the DWRLF Operator Certification set-aside advances other State Goals:

Transparent, Accountable and Effective Government:

- By providing funding to other programs in state government with the same goals as the DWRLF, we are leveraging funding sources outside of general fund monies. This allows them to fund new projects or better fund existing ones without tapping into the state general fund, ultimately resulting in savings for the taxpayers of Louisiana
- Working with other programs is a Best Management Practice -- method or technique found to be the most effective and practical means of achieving an objective, while making the optimum use of available resources.

CFDA Number 66.468 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

40 CFR 35.3500 - 3585

Louisiana RS 40:2821-2826, LRS 36:254.1

1. Current Economic condition—dwindling resources means need for collaboration and partnering of programs and optimizing dollars available to reduce the burden to taxpayers.