

Information for Employers

In order to help develop tomorrow's water and wastewater work force, Florida Rural Water Association (FRWA) has partnered with Florida's Department of Education and the US Department of Labor in creating an apprenticeship program for water and wastewater operators. The goal of this program is to provide the future work force the technical training and on-the-job learning needed to become effective operators.

Apprenticeship offers many benefits to both future operators and systems. The system gains access to a vetted pool of applicants that will be given technical training in addition to their on-the-job training (OJT). The apprentice can become a valuable employee as they learn first-hand essential skills on the job and learn about the system's assets from a mentor. This mentor is a licensed operator who already works for the system; an ideal mentor has supervisory/management experience.

Apprentices receive technical instruction in addition to their on-the-job learning. This instruction helps to strengthen and round out the knowledge base of the apprentice, making them a more valuable employee. This training is provided by FRWA staff with assistance from our associate members and vendors to ensure the apprentices receive the highest quality training. The program also includes the coursework required for receiving a Class C operator's license for water or wastewater. Apprentices will earn the required hours for their license through the OJT.

The program lasts two years, but can be completed in less time if the apprentice has previous experience in the field. The current price of the program is \$2,000 for a single apprentice. Program costs may change if a system sponsors more than one. This price includes all materials and training events for the two years; it does not include the costs related to travel or testing. Employers may have an apprentice sign a Scholarship-Loan Agreement wherein the apprentice promises to repay the employer the cost of the program either in like-kind (years of employment) or through reimbursement. A sample Scholarship-Loan Agreement will be provided by emailing apprenticeship@frwa.net.

Applications can be requested from the FRWA office, in person, by mail, or by e-mail. Employers wishing to have an already employed employee (incumbent worker) enter the program do not need to file an application; incumbent workers must still meet the minimum requirements. Apprentices are required to meet the following criteria in order to be considered for the program:

- A. Age: Apprentices must be at least 18 years old; proof of age is required (driver's license, birth certificate, etc.)
- B. High School Diploma or equivalent
- C. Driver's License: Apprentices are required to have a valid, current, driver's license.
- D. Drug Test: Apprentices must take and pass a drug test
- E. Background Check: Apprentices must pass a background check

Applications and supporting documents may be shared with partnered employers pursuant to employment as outlined in the Standards for Apprenticeship, available on the FRWA website or by request. Supporting documents for incumbent workers must be received prior to admission into the program. For additional details, comments, questions, or concerns please contact Joni Synatschk, Apprenticeship Program Coordinator, at (850) 668-2746 or apprenticeship@frwa.net.