

Poll Results: An Action Plan to Enhance Operator Credential Portability

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BENEFITS of credential portability?

- Mobility for the Operator
 - Operators can move to another area and not have go back through the certification process
 - Operators can move and have employment opportunities
 - More mobility for military
 - Working in neighboring states
 - Allows employees to find the best employer, working across boarder if they live close
 - Operators work across state lines
 - Allows people to move
 - Save time and money for operators
- Employer Benefits
 - As people need to relocate, this allows employers and the credentialed person to find the right employee
 - Employers can find larger resources for employment pools
 - Employers can find the best candidate
 - Give employers best opportunities
 - Larger talent pipeline
 - Helps with succession planning
 - Widened employment pool
 - Able to recruit from larger pool of applicants when needed
 - Transition time reduced to being people up to speed
- Workforce/Industry Attractiveness

- Increasing profile and attractiveness of career as operator
- Increases attractiveness of industry
- Increases operator employability
- Increase workforce
- Workforce flexibility
- Workforce availability between states
- Wage competition
- Emergency Response
 - Emergency responses
 - Backups during emergencies
- Standardization
 - Standardization
 - Increased standardization
 - Known baseline for operator knowledge and skills
 - Standard increases skilled workers and competency, this allows for interstate employee transfer

CHALLENGES of credential portability?

- Impedes disaster response communication between states
- Reciprocity issues
- Portability
- Recruitment
- Distances
- “Poaching”
 - Workforce protection/“poaching”
 - More poaching between states
- Law/Politics
 - States not willing to change due to political pressure
 - Legislation impeachment
 - Specific state regulations/requirements

- States have legislation requiring them to do things certain ways
 - Meeting/understanding different state rules and regulations
 - State laws prohibit standardization
 - Some are mandated by state legislature
- Variance in Jurisdictional Approaches
 - Everyone has a different program
 - Everyone thinks they have the best program
 - Each certifying authority has different rules
 - Licensure vs. certification
 - Unique state-specific licensing
 - Different continuing education requirements between state programs
 - Training different in each state
 - Allow state to make own certifying needs know
 - Different states may have different needs in operators
 - Exams
 - Use of different certification exams
 - Standardized exams (ABC) are a key element of credential
 - Regulatory questions on examinations
 - Need to have fewer discrepancies in exams
- Lack of Agreed-Upon Standards
 - Agreement on best practices
 - Getting agreement on the requirements for credentials
 - Need a general framework
 - Need to standardize certification levels
 - Facilities need to be standardized to allow for operators to be able to be portable
- Autonomy
 - States' rights vs workers' rights
 - States don't want to give up control
 - Everyone – and every organization – has a strong desire to be in control of their destiny – some are afraid of losing their identity and control in a collective

What SOLUTIONS to the challenges might you suggest?

- Create time machine and go back to 1930 and start from scratch
- Post requirements online to reduce admin costs
- Let's see who benefits and then work backwards
- Don't look at the laws as they are because we won't get anywhere – look at where we need to be
- Digital badging
- Reregistered apprenticeship programs
- EPA strategic workforce plan to include national certification template
- Increase size of workforce to decrease impact of challenging
- Agreements Between Individual Jurisdictions/Regions
 - States creating MOUs between each other
 - Drive for change – start regionally (EPA regions) to align requirements by forming alliances among stakeholders in regions
 - Start at regional system, e.g. New England
 - Regional cooperative agreements with bordering state programs
 - Mutual state agreements to accept certification from other states
 - Increased use of reciprocal agreements
- Emergency Response
 - Mutual aid agreements for emergencies
 - Limited agreements activated during emergencies
- Catalog of Program Details
 - Single source to reviews other state's licensing requirements
 - Profiles on state and tribal certification programs to identify commonalities and inconsistencies
- Professional Operator Program
 - ABC PO being recognized by regulatory authorities
 - PO, everyone using ABC
 - Professional Operator program recognition – either stand-alone or like-to-like reciprocity
 - PO program acceptance
 - Use PO program as standard for reciprocity
 - ABC Professional Operator Certification

- Differentiate between licensure and certification: use the PO certification as a basis for the certification process, and allow states to license operators based on other criteria such as their beliefs for experience, but the certification is universal
- Flood gates when PO becomes the state process and reciprocity allows recognition of other states' process
- Exams
 - ABC exam being the catalyst as the standard
 - Standardized exams
 - Non-sequential exams — take the exam level you qualify for
- Standardization/Model Standards
 - Get certification levels labeled the same
 - Consistent system of classifications
 - Work towards standardization in terms of exams and certification requirements
 - Standardization of regulations
 - Need to develop a framework for Facilities and Operators so that the Certification systems across the country meet a minimum standard
 - Clear agreement on core elements for operator certification
 - Encourage states to adopt model code/standards rather than cherry-picking components
 - Use Canadian Water and Wastewater Operator Certification Committee's Best Practices as a model to build on
 - Leadership from Federal Government (EPA or Department of Labor) in revisiting the basic baseline requirements to enhance equivalency – top down only is the way to break barriers (example of aviation industry)
 - Federal legislation (not a favored solution)
- Bring People Together
 - Start a committee to begin process - build it and they will come
 - Step one of the solution is the programs starting the conversation
 - People who want change need to speak up

- Have everyone agree to what it looks like
- We need buy-in from jurisdictions to standardize
- Programs must be willing to come to consensus on what the requirements are
- Have directors in a room to talk on a high level

