



Wastewater Operator Workforce Findings & Recommendations



MVRPC in partnership with the Designated Management Agencies, which oversee the management of the region's wastewater, researched various programs and resources available that could support future workforce challenges related to the shortage of certified wastewater operators.

Prepared by:



MIAMI VALLEY

Regional Planning Commission

Data shown are based on the most current information available from cited sources and are subject to change. Employment projections, wage estimates, and living wage figures are provided for informational purposes only. For more information, please refer to the formal report.



Workforce Data

National Outlook



Expected **7% decline** in employment for certified water and wastewater operators by 2034.



The Bureau of Labor Statistics anticipates there will be **over 10,000 annual job openings** by 2033.

Dayton Region



The **Dayton Region MSA** anticipates modest **growth of 4.9%** by 2035.



Across Dayton's five county region, there are **384 certified wastewater operators** registered with Ohio EPA.

Wages



2024 Dept of Labor wage data showed the average salary in **Dayton-Kettering MSA** for wastewater operator as **\$59,070 or \$28.40/hr.**



Operators in **west central non metro area** showed an average salary of **\$59,540/year or \$28.62/hr.**

Cost of Living



MIT Living Wage Calculator estimates living wage for a single person to cover cost of basic needs in the area is **\$19-\$20/hr.**



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Needs Assessment

of Wastewater Facilities in the Dayton Region

MVRPC conducted a needs assessment of wastewater facilities across the Region to understand concerns and challenges related to workforce.



92%

Indicated they currently have enough staff to provide full time operations without interruption.



Primary concerns with workforce include:

- inexperience of candidates
- lack of resources to offer competitive pay for retention
- lack of career awareness as pathway for younger individuals



61%

Anticipate service area to grow within next 10 years

3,140

Between **July, 2024-June, 2025** a total of **3,140** people in Ohio took the exam to become a certified wastewater operator of various classes with a **35% passing rate**.



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Regional Staffing Requirements

Below is a breakdown of total hours across the Dayton Region it will take to ensure treatment facilities are staffed at full capacity to support plant operations without disruption.

Class A regional staffing requirements-1 hour/per week

Class I regional staffing requirements-22.5 hours/per week

Class II regional staffing requirements-340 hours/per week

Class III regional staffing requirements-400 hours/per week

Class IV regional staffing requirements-280 hours/per week



Training and Education

Across Southwest Ohio there are multiple opportunities for education and training to become certified wastewater operator.



Colleges

Sinclair Community College and Cincinnati State Technical & Community College offer tailored programs to prepare students for careers in this industry and include internships to support learning.



Industry Partners

Ohio Water Environment Association established a Water Training Academy to support entry level licensure. Students taking this course can supplement 4.8 months of the state's required experience.



Virtual Training

Operator Training Committee of Ohio offers virtual and in person certification training courses for all class levels of operators.



Recommendations for DMAs

Career Pathway Awareness

- Attend career fairs at middle and high schools to expose students to career opportunities|
- Offer hands on learning experiences and tours at the local wastewater treatment facility with middle school aged youth
- Partner directly with high schools that offer capstone and internship programs allowing students to gain real-world experience by job shadowing career
- Coordinate paid internship opportunities to high schools with the Strategic Ohio Council for Higher Education
- Work with Career Navigators at middle and high schools to market career opportunities to youth
- Work with trade/career technical schools across the region to incorporate a few courses into existing engineering programs that provide exposure to the career
- Work with community-based organizations (CBO) that provide support to non-traditional students, immigrants, populations re-entering the workforce, or veterans to market career pathways and opportunities



Recommendations for DMAs

Increased Promotion of Workforce Opportunities

- Establish relationships with the county workforce development offices to market job opportunities
- Work with community-based organizations (CBO) to market job opportunities to non-traditional students, immigrants, populations re-entering the workforce, or veterans
- Coordinate with industry partners to advertise job opportunities or establish an apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship program to increase available talent
- Expand reach of job marketing beyond current community or county through regional partners such as the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce-or other regional resources and websites
- Work with human resources departments and public information offices to “Spotlight a Day in the Life” of wastewater operators offering positive and unique information about the industry and careers

Recommendations for DMAs

Alternative Options

- Contract with private providers to supplement staffing needs
- Establish a service agreement with neighboring communities to share staffing needs for Class I & Class II facilities
- Establish an entry level position that does not require experience to foster on the job training while gaining necessary experience and hours to meet EPA certification requirements
- Offer flexible schedule opportunities and/or comp-time, if appropriate
- Coordinate with industry partners such as the Ohio Water Environment Association to expand their Wastewater Training Academy to enhance the Basic Course program encouraging the development of study cohorts outside of the classroom with seasoned operators to gain additional knowledge



Thank You

Thank you for your interest in learning more about the challenges and opportunities facing the wastewater operator workforce. For more information, please see the details below or contact Elizabeth Baxter at ebaxter@mvrpc.org.

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