

BY SUE G. SCHNEIDER



Schneider

Workforce Strategies Committee to Address Three Key Initiatives by 2012

Becoming the chair of the Workforce Strategies Committee this summer at ACE09 was a tremendous honor for me. I currently serve as general manager of Spartanburg Water in Spartanburg, S.C., and have more than 20 years of experience in environmental management. I look forward to helping to lead this committee in its important work for our association.

Our former chair, Katie McCain, did an outstanding job of launching and leading the committee over the past several years. All of us on the committee extend our sincere thanks to Katie for all of her accomplishments.

The committee was very active over this past summer—planning and preparing for the work we want to complete over the next three years. Three key initiatives were assigned to the committee in AWWA's 2009–2012 Workforce Programs Business Plan:

- Define a system for developing and sharing content among utilities and sections so that AWWA's workforce-related website allows for the exchange of best practices and social networking around workforce issues.
- Support completion of the Department of Labor (DOL) Water Sector Competency Model by working on the following initiatives: define competencies for four water sector workforce job areas; define a career clusters map; define topics for a website map for a career awareness website open to the public; define topics for a website map for a careers section for youth, parents, and educators; create water education lesson plans for teachers.
- Develop career paths based on the four priority job categories from the competency model, showing the progression from entry-level to senior-level positions.

The Water Sector Competency model was approved and adopted by the DOL and can be found at the Competency Model Clearinghouse website at www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/default.aspx.

This model represents the cornerstone of many future activities and opportunities for addressing workforce issues. Creating a competency model provides for the creation of a careers awareness website and identifies water sector careers as a critical workforce cluster within the DOL.

Other items of business that the committee is addressing are:

- A workshop is being planned for the AWWA/WEF Utility Management Conference in San Francisco, Calif., in February 2010. Contact Richard Gertsberger (rgerstberger@tapresource.com) for information on how you can participate.
- McCain is working closely with the Veterans Administration to identify synergies and links for matching veterans with water sector careers.
- Brad Jurkovic and Nicki Pozos completed a scope-of-work assessment for the Water Research Foundation on the quantitative assessment of workforce needs. This assessment is necessary for collecting quantitative water industry data, the absence of which has been a barrier to the DOL's ability to assess our workforce needs. US Environmental Protection Agency and DOL statistics regarding water sector jobs do not currently match, which negatively affects funding for our sector. The proposal has been forwarded to the next round of funding consideration by the foundation.
- The Workforce Strategies Committee now has a Facebook page. Please look us up, and become a fan to support our critical work in seeking solutions to the water sector's future workforce needs.

—Sue G. Schneider, general manager of Spartanburg Water, has published and presented papers in various journals and at national and regional conferences. Schneider has undergraduate degrees from the Ohio State University and the University of Cincinnati and an MBA from Wake Forest University.