

## WEFMAX Day I

### WORKSHOP OVERVIEW AND IDENTIFY KEY CHALLENGES

This session reviewed key hurdles identified by Emerging Leaders Workgroup, audience poll, and audience discussions.

**Moderators:** Jeff Berlin & Nashita Naureen

1. Challenges/Hurdles - different results depending on who you ask!
2. Intimidation due to lack of experience and connections
3. Not a lack of awareness of opportunities. Explanation of details and what it means.
4. YP groups are predominantly engineers. Institutional barriers to participation. Completely different list of barriers for operators.
  - a. The word professional can be intimidating/off putting. Operators see themselves as workers - not the button-down shirts.
  - b. Timing of events can be different/challenging.
  - c. Does water/wastewater operator stand out as a career path that you can define without being part of the industry.
  - d. At operator level, laughed at redefinition of licensure as "Professional Operator"
  - e. Support from employers different for operators. Value not as apparent for utilities.
  - f. Participation is in a different way - participate vs lead, organize,
5. Push/pull concept
6. Invited to the party. Takes a strong personality to invite yourself.
7. YP Liaison position on each technical committee. Technical committee leadership come talk to YP committee meeting. Short presentation at the event.

### YP PRESENTATION IDEAS AND Q&A

**Moderators:** Jeff Berlin & Nashita Naureen

**Presenters:**

Lauren McKnight & Paige Bensen (WEASC)

Sarah Vander Meulen & Hannah Palmer-Dwore (RMWEA)

Tina Sheikhzeinoddin (AWEA)

Ashley Griffin (CWP-KT)

1. Engagement - is it OK to be a "Happy Hour Factory"?
2. What is the next step to bridge gap of involvement?
3. University chapters
4. Restarting in person events
5. Giving small responsibilities by name specifically
6. Succession planning for roles

7. What is the value for YPs to join? Different for different people.
  - a. Resume builder
  - b. Exposure
  - c. Connection
  - d. Going to conferences
  - e. Sense of community - higher purpose - cause
8. How did you get involved?
  - a. Through a colleague
  - b. Family member
  - c. Pushed/voluntold
  - d. Teacher/professor
9. Wish I had asked more questions
10. What I want
  - a. Help others bridge the gap and create actions
  - b. Need ideas and examples about what opportunities and paths are available?
  - c. Work on conference
  - d. Growing involvement from local to national
  - e. Flow chart of interactions
11. Give people an example of path forward and next steps.
  - a. Need to know about the programs
  - b. "Leadership" title may be intimidating to YPs.

### CROWD SOURCING EXERCISE TOP RESULTS

Attendees were asked to think about the following: What do you hope can happen in the future? How do we make that happen?

Below are the **Top 6 Results** scored out of a total of twenty-five points...

1. Water/Wastewater Textbook for STEM/Highschool students. Goal is to gain young students to industry. Have stem/Schools add to curriculum
2. Virtual Reality: Show what they do; show it's done; show career paths and interactive job duties
3. Develop a Leadership Institute
  - a. Implement a year long leadership training program sponsored by the MA focused towards young professionals
  - b. Develop an online interactive Association leadership institute for incoming or prospective leaders so they can better understand requirements, obligations, and opportunities
  - c. Create a webinar for MAs to teach them how to start or improve a MA Leadership Academy
4. Get emerging leaders
  - a. Incentive young professional participation with additional YP recognition/awards at annual conference
  - b. Get every emerging professional involved in another facet of the MA or WEF
5. Mentoring
  - a. Implement a "Past Officer" mentoring program with new emerging leaders as he mentee's
  - b. In your MA... have the Young Professional Committee pair mentors with first time conference attendees, YPs/students

- c. Require all committees (MA & WEF) to attract a YP Liaison in a year or dissolve
- 6. Educating on “Why we Work in Water”
  - a. Have MA coordinate with Youth Organizations (Scouts, Explorers, 4-H etc.... to educate youth on “why we work in water”
  - b. Invite all YPs/Emerging Leaders to attend WEFTEC; Provide mentor to guide them and provide funding; Work with YP to gain buy-in from their employer (e.g. .through supportive award letter)
  - c. Targeting PPL who did not finish college to enter our industry as operators/inspectors... make room in our industry for them and we have great opportunities

#### ADDITIONAL CROWD SOURCING IDEAS SHARED

- Board
  - Have a voting position on the MA Executive Board
  - Emerging leaders attend WEF Board of trustee meeting, each House of Delegates meeting, each committee leadership council meeting and WEF Presidents reception at WEFTEC
  - One person is implementing a clear, concise career advancement route to be the WEF President by 2028
- Community Service Program
  - Intergenerational MA mentor community service project chaired by an Emerging professional with a seasoned professional vice chair
  - Start community clean water “give back” project (e.g., Rain Garden, flood control, farm runoff etc.)
  - Create a community water festival
- Committees
  - Create committee fair for YPs and others. Have all committees show why you should join their committee
  - Have a YP on every committee
  - New emerging leader’s subcommittee focused on resources and support for new immigrants in the industry
  - Have a meeting with the whole YP committee to
    - Educate on MA and committees
    - Recruit YP liaisons for each active MA committee
    - Create a survey to collect needs and perceived value to address shortfalls
  - Recruit active and willing members of the MA to join committees that enhance the MA and the water/sewer industry in general. This will also establish a clear career path for the individual
  - Create a training program for leaders preparing to exit (stepping down from a committee position, retirement, accepting anew role), that will teach people how to finish well. (i.e., when they go forward progress continues)
- Education
  - Start building wastewater careers earlier to build WEF and MA membership
  - Connect and coordinate with the civil engineering dept at engineering schools to develop a presentation ab out the water/wastewater industry and follow-up with technical presentations from a conference
  - Have water professionals discuss water careers a High School level. Make water great again!

- Establish WEF Champions in Engineering schools and High Schools
- Engagement
  - Get all YPs to the table whether its meetings, socials, or conferences
- Funding
  - Accept individual donations that pay costs for YP engagement (expenses, reg, etc.)
  - Sponsorship funded all expenses paid trip to WEFTEC for first time YP attendees (includes reg for the conference)
- Mentoring
  - Match EIs with established leaders (one to one mentor (mentee style) to solidify long-term engagement
  - Establish a committee that is responsible for mentoring young professionals and emerging professionals who are not “young” but are willing to take on a leadership role in the MA
  - Design a mentorship for HS/YP with experienced members
  - Existing MA Leaders given goal to mentor at least 2 emerging leaders a year
  - Every current leader to support 5 new leaders a year
- Leadership Programs
  - Create a leadership program A WEF guide/manual would help
- Recognition
  - Public recognition and appreciation for drinking water as well as collection systems – willingness to pay for it. Start with public grade school adding “Water” to the class
- Scholarships
  - Each MA to give out two out two scholarships they can award to YP leaders for attending WEFTEC (include full reg, flight, hotel)
  - Scholarships to award to YP Leaders for attending WEFTEC – include reg, hotel, flight
  - MA to send at least two emerging leaders to WEFMAX or WEFTEC per year
  - Sponsor 2 YP leaders to attend a national event each year (WEFMAX, WEFTEC, DC Fly-IN etc.)
  - Recruit young professionals to be able to participate in conferences without worrying about the cost. They will be fully engaged and encouraged to be active in leadership in committees and other MA roles
- Training
  - Provide worthwhile and sufficient training accessible to all MA members
  - Offer best training for members
- Utilities/Operators
  - MA to create a program to engage management to support operators to participate and keep operators engaged
  - Free professional/operator member association dues for a YP that joins a technical committee
  - Construct/improve all WWTP’s to make them the ideal workplace then pay operators similar to engineers, so they know their worth
  - Fill all staffing vacancies at utilities. This will allow members to join WEF and save committees
- Value Demonstrated to Emerging Leaders in ways that make sense to them and those to come Leaders
  - Senior leadership to embrace value of YPS, and get them involved in the planning and communication

- Water for People
  - Water for People is fully funded to help all people that are in need
- WEF
  - Develop a You Tube Channel that targets kids to expose them to the industry and convince them to join
  - Facilitate INFLOW programs at each MA Annual Conference
  - Make water/wastewater a world-class industry because of the leaders in WEF and the MAs
  - WEF billboards in every major city

## ACTIONS SUMMARY

1. Communication - small visuals, concise detail.
2. Ask and follow up on where your passion lies
3. Kill useless committees
4. MA Survey at beginning of year to ID issues, what is good, what is lacking
5. Non-technical webinar template that covers why YPs should get involved and ROI for managers
6. Template - how to make the ask (to attend, value, etc.)
7. Find your replacement and overlap with them
8. Target high school and colleges with water career information
9. Value stories to share passion and purpose
10. Share the work, designate a communication lead to distribute opportunities
11. Market engagement as a retention and growth to employers

## TAKEAWAYS:

1. Survey results vary depending on the audience and how you ask
  - a. Seasoned Professionals/overall – concerned with awareness
  - b. Emerging professionals/underrepresented – concerned with support and inclusion
2. Action Summary
  - a. Invite to the party
  - b. Liaisons/connections/explain
  - c. Encourage questions
  - d. Provide example of path forward

## WEFMAX Day 2

MA presentations and the History of Charleston Water are posted at <https://www.wef.org/membership/wef-member-associations/wefmax/>

HISTORY OF CHARLESTON WATER – Presenter: Kin Hill, CEO Charleston Water System

## MA SHARING SESSION

**Moderator:** Janet Cann

WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA – Presenter: David Baize  
Workforce Development and New Group Initiatives

MISSOURI WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION - Presenter: Scott Foley  
New Conference Attendee Orientation by the MWEA DEI Committee

INDIANA WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION - Presenters: Robin Shrader & Kate DeHaan  
IWEA's success/challenges/future plans on implementing a new Leadership Development Institute

ADJOURNED