



Benchmarking Fact Sheet

Overall Purpose

QualServe Benchmarking is designed to help utilities improve overall operational efficiency and effectiveness. The goals of the Benchmarking effort, both now and in the future, are to:

- 1) Provide education and understanding around benchmarking and performance indicators;
- 2) Establish longitudinal performance data for participating water and wastewater utilities;
- 3) Provide a reliable and sustainable data collection plan to utilities;
- 4) Provide meaningful metric results;
- 5) Offer customized regional reports and analyses and data sharing workshops; and
- 6) Lay the ground work for process benchmarking services.

QualServe Benchmarking Services and Products -- Current

QualServe Benchmarking presently includes three primary components:

- Annual Benchmarking Performance Indicators Survey
- Reports from the data collected in the Annual Survey
- Facilitated, customized regional Data Sharing Workshops

Performance Indicators Survey

The cornerstone of the QualServe Benchmarking effort is the annual collection of metric data values based on the 22 key performance indicators identified by the QualServe Benchmarking program. With this data, AWWA/QualServe is able to produce a variety of separate reports (see more below).

Some of the key features of the survey are:

- Survey is offered annually and provides a consistent and sustainable data collection opportunity to utilities.
- Survey includes/gathers 300 data values used to help utilities identify, track, and calculate the 22 key performance indicators.
- Utilities of all sizes and types (water only, wastewater only, and combined water and wastewater) are able to participate.
- Participating utilities are invited to provide data for all 22 indicators, but may provide as much or as little data as fits their situation and/or meets their specific interests and needs.

This annual survey is a continuation of the successful pilot project conducted in 2002, which was followed by an expansion in 2003 and then two successful years of data collection 2004 and 2006.

Benchmarking Performance Indicator Reports

To accompany the annual survey of benchmarking performance indicators, a variety of reports are made available to both the participating utilities and other water and wastewater professionals interested in learning about how utilities are performing. These reports include:

- *Annual Benchmarking Summary Report for Participating Utilities*
- *Annual Benchmarking Report*
- *Multiple-Year Benchmarking Report*
- *Custom Regional Benchmarking Performance Indicators Report*

Annual Benchmarking Summary Report for Participating Utilities

- Report is produced on an annual basis and performed in accordance with the data validation process. The report will include current year data.
- All utility participants that submit data will receive a free individualized summary report.
- Report presents the participants data against the peer group's aggregate data for each performance indicator.
- Data is presented in 25th percentile, mean, and 75th percentile statistics and categorized by water only, wastewater only and combined utilities.

Annual Benchmarking Report

- Report will be produced on an annual basis (except when a multiple-year report is published – see below) and offered for purchase to all utility and non-utility customers.
- Report presents the group's data in aggregate form for each performance indicator. Data is further analyzed by type of organization, five size categories and four geographic regions.
- This report also includes frequency distribution, quantitative and confidence rating summaries.
- The 2006 Benchmarking Performance Indicators for Water and Wastewater Utilities Survey & Report is scheduled for publishing in the first half of 2007. The report will be available as a downloadable, PDF document and a print copy, and offered for sale through the AWWA Bookstore.

Multiple-Year Benchmarking Report

- Report will be produced every three to four years and will be offered for purchase to all utility and non-utility customers.
- Report presents the group's data in aggregate form for each performance indicator and will include multiple year data (over three to four years). Data will be analyzed by type of organization, five size categories, four geographic regions, plus frequency distribution, quantitative, and confidence-rating summaries. This report will also include multi-year data and present trend analyses.
- The first report of this kind was published in 2005, based on data collected from surveys conducted in 2003 and 2004. The next multiple-year report is scheduled for 2009.

Custom Benchmarking Performance Indicators Report

- The customer report is produced upon request from a group of utilities.
- The custom report is produced using the most recently validated data set.
- The custom report provides analysis only from the utilities requesting the report, and will typically provide custom regional analyses.
- A custom report could be developed for a group of utilities from different geographic areas. However, this would limit the indicators available for use in the custom report and analysis.
- Each custom report will include "gap analysis" showing participants their performance relative to the other organizations in the database (in aggregate or with company code names, depending on the wishes of the group) for each performance indicator.
- Each report can also display a "top performer" analysis for selected indicators, which allows for more purposeful discussion among utilities interested in sharing data to help improve performance (see Data Sharing Workshops below).
- Report generation costs will be invoiced once contract between utilities and AWWA is initiated.

Performance Indicators Data Sharing Workshops

These new workshops are designed primarily for utilities that have participated in the annual QualServe Benchmarking Performance Indicators Survey. The process was pilot tested with two groups of utilities in December 2006 (North Carolina) and January 2007 (Florida) and is now available upon request.

The workshop is designed to focus on a handful of indicators (NOT all 22) that the group agrees to prior to the workshop. These indicators would be selected based on the results of the custom analysis of the most recent performance indicators survey and a pre-workshop conference call with all participating utilities. All participants would receive a custom report prior to attending the workshop. The cost of the report would be included in the participation fee.

Anticipated outcomes for participants include:

- Achieve a common understanding of performance indicator definitions, and learn how each utility is gathering data for the annual survey.
- Learning from "top performers" to identify potential process changes, new activities or work behaviors, or new data recording and gathering strategies to help improve performance and improve performance measurement.
- Establish a basis and baseline for future process benchmarking studies, both with fellow workshop participants and other utilities.

What the Future Holds

QualServe Benchmarking is evaluating the process of reviewing, modifying and adding new indicators. Part of this evaluation is research based and will be included in the upcoming research being conducted jointly by AWWA and the AWWA Research Foundation (AwwaRF). Another part of this effort will come via volunteer committees whose technical focus/expertise lines up with the individual indicators.

With the advent of the Data Sharing Workshops, utility managers will begin to develop both new skills in data collection and learn about new process improvements and enhancements. Consequently, the next evolutionary step for benchmarkers is to proceed to process benchmarking studies. These facilitated studies would be conducted at a host utility, typically a "top performer" for a given indicator or set of indicators. The study would include intensive observation and discussion of specific processes and procedures, and the resulting report would capture this knowledge for all utilities.