The Partnership for Safe Water

The Partnership is a voluntary effort between six drinking water organizations and more than 300 water utilities. The goal of the Partnership is to provide a new measure of public health protection to millions by encouraging utilities to voluntarily improve performance beyond current regulatory requirements. The preventative measures are based around optimizing treatment plant performance and distribution system operation. The result is the production and delivery of superior quality water to all utility customers.

Regulatory requirements for surface water filtration plants and drinking water distribution systems are becoming increasingly stringent. Accordingly, the Partnership program provides operators, field staff, managers, and administrators with tools to assess the performance of treatment plants and distribution systems and develop plans to improve performance beyond even proposed regulatory levels.

Partner Organizations

The Partnership for Safe Water is comprised of an unprecedented alliance of six prestigious drinking water organizations:

- AWWA – American Water Works Association
- AMWA – Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
- ASDWA – Association of State Drinking Water Administrators
- NAWC – National Association of Water Companies
- USEPA – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- WRF - Water Research Foundation

Subscriber Benefits

Optimized Operations and Improved Water Quality

- Utility subscribers benefit from procedures, software, and manuals to implement and monitor water quality improvements.
- Plants that complete the self-assessment process reduce 95th percentile combined filter effluent turbidity by an average of over 60 percent.
- While individual utility data are kept private, Partnership subscribers have access to the program’s Annual Data Summary report that enables comparison with industry benchmarks.
- Utility subscribers incorporate the program’s protocols to effectively identify performance limiting factors.
- Employees of Partnership utility subscribers demonstrate a sense of purpose as well as a personal and team commitment to achieving the highest standards of water quality and operational excellence.
- Partnership subscribers may also participate as program volunteers gaining industry exposure and networking opportunities that are critical for professional growth, development, and operational knowledge.
- Partnership staff is available to assist and direct utility and plant personnel with all aspects of the program.

Program Recognition

- Participation in the Partnership program demonstrates utility commitment to water quality and public health protection. Progress through the program’s phases earns awards which can be highlighted to demonstrate utility accomplishments.

Confidence in Performance

- The Partnership’s technical materials, processes, and software help prepare utilities to meet more stringent regulatory requirements.
- Utility participation in this unique program instills confidence in regulators, customers, and the public of the utility’s commitment to continuous improvement and optimization.

Utility Eligibility

The utility must be a water system that provides filtered surface water or manages a water distribution system. Utilities of all sizes are eligible to participate. The utility must demonstrate that it has met all applicable regulatory requirements during the six months prior to applying for Partnership membership. Unfiltered systems, or those that do not maintain a disinfectant residual in the distribution system, are not eligible for the program at this time.

Program Phases

There are four phases to the Partnership program:

- Phase I – Commitment
- Phase II – Baseline Data Collection
- Phase III – Self-Assessment
- Phase IV – Optimized System (Optional)

The first three phases are required. The fourth is optional.
**Phase I: Commitment**
To begin Phase I, complete the Membership Application and return it to the Partnership for Safe Water. Utilities may select to subscribe to the Treatment Plant Optimization Program, the Distribution System Optimization Program, or both programs (subscription fees apply to each of the programs). Utilities enrolled in the Partnership must be in full compliance with all applicable regulations for a minimum of six months prior to the application date. Upon submission of a complete application form and payment of all applicable fees, the utility will receive a New Member Kit containing the materials needed to begin the program. Utilities are not required to meet Partnership goals to join.

**Phase II: Baseline Data Collection**
To complete Phase II and establish a performance baseline, the water system submits 12 months of performance data to the Partnership. Treatment plants provide raw, settled (recommended) and combined filter effluent turbidity data. Distribution systems provide disinfectant residual and disinfectant by-product data. This is ideally accomplished within 180 days of joining the Partnership.

**Phase III: Self-Assessment**
Phase III of the program culminates with the completion of a comprehensive self-assessment of treatment plant and/or distribution system performance and operations. There is no time requirement for the completion of Phase III. The self-assessment process allows for the identification of Performance Limiting Factors and the development of targeted Action Plans to improve performance. Phase III support tools, including a self-assessment guide, report template, and materials checklist are provided by the Partnership.

The Phase III Completion Report summarizes the self-assessment results and Action Plan. This report is reviewed by a team of utility optimization experts from the Partnership’s Program Effectiveness Assessment Committee (PEAC) to ensure an effective and unbiased process. Upon successful review, the utility receives the Directors Award. The submission of annual data is required to maintain Directors Award status, which is formally recognized by the Partnership at five-year intervals.

**Beyond Phase III**
Participation in the Partnership beyond Phase III is voluntary and not required for ongoing Partnership participation. There are two levels of performance recognition beyond Phase III – the Presidents Award and the Phase IV Excellence Award in Water Treatment or Distribution System Operation.

The Presidents Award for Water Treatment or Distribution System Operation represents meeting specific numeric water quality standards while maintaining progress towards achieving full, demonstrated optimization. The Phase IV Excellence in Water Treatment or Distribution System Operation Awards are for systems that demonstrate full optimization and meet all of the Partnership’s water quality optimization goals and operational requirements.

Utilities must be a Directors Award recipient in good standing with the Partnership to apply for either award. All utilities interested in pursuing recognition beyond Phase III must register with the Partnership to receive more detailed information about the application process. Additional information may be accessed on the Partnership website at: [www.awwa.org/partnership](http://www.awwa.org/partnership).

**How to Subscribe**
Subscribe to the Partnership by submitting a membership application to the Partnership for Safe Water. The annual subscription fees, listed below, are based on utility population served and are pro-rated based on the application date. Utilities may participate in the Treatment Plant Optimization Program, Distribution System Optimization Program, or both programs. Separate fees are required for each program. Fees are established to make the program self-sustaining, while providing value and benefits to utility subscribers. Contributions from sponsor organizations, as well as volunteer support, help to keep the program cost-effective for all subscribers.

Annual fees are invoiced in November and are due in February to allow budget allocation from either calendar year. Payment in US dollars is required. The applications are available on the Partnership website at: [www.awwa.org/partnership](http://www.awwa.org/partnership).

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For additional information, please contact the Partnership Program Coordinator at [partnership@awwa.org](mailto:partnership@awwa.org), or 303-347-6169.