

WEF MA – NGICP – Apr'17

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MA Newsletter Article from WEF Headquarters

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April 2017

Headline: Building better water quality one job at a time

Deck: National Green Infrastructure Certification Program celebrates a first year of successes

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The National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP) has two main purposes: to encourage water quality improvements via green infrastructure (GI) projects and to create jobs for those who know how to build them. NGICP took several major steps in the past year toward achieving these goals and has several more in the works.

Initiated under the leadership of DC Water and the Water Environment Federation, NGICP sets certification standards for green infrastructure (GI) construction, inspection, and maintenance workers. The program takes a different tone than most GI and water quality programs. It focuses on the “how” of GI. The program’s certification establishes green workforces to give utilities and private customers confidence in their choice of landscape and construction providers. It also provides a credential to certified workers that meets international best practice standards. And because the program is national in scope the same certification will apply from coast to coast, providing a “portable” credential that will expand beyond the U.S. eventually.

Major development

During the development phase of the program in 2016, NGICP took several major steps to carefully conceive a nationally relevant certification program. WEF convened 14 founding partners (see list on p. XX) to create the necessary governance and foundational materials.

Representatives from the founding partner organizations participated in the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG). The TAG oversees the development of the program’s technical components, while the SAG develops the vision and the implementation plan for the national rollout of the NGICP. A separate Certification Council oversees the program’s governance elements.

First, these groups conducted a job task analysis survey to determine what components the program needed to cover. They fed these survey results into an exam blueprint, which led to an official curriculum. Training support materials came next as the first exam was developed.

First exam

This progression led to the inaugural NGICP exam on Dec. 13, 2016. Seven locations — corresponding to many of the founding partners — hosted the exam for more than 90 applicants. Exam locations included:

- Washington, D.C
- Baltimore, Md.
- Rockville, Md.

- Harrisburg, Pa.
- Pittsburgh
- Fairfax County, Va.
- Milwaukee

The 3-hour exam tested applicants on their knowledge of entry-level green infrastructure fundamentals, construction methods, inspection techniques, and maintenance procedures in accordance with the Exam Blueprint.

First class and continued improvement

On Jan. 26, 2017, NGICP announced its first class of 62 certified individuals who passed the exam.

Now, NGICP will use this year to refine policies and procedures and continue to build the exam database.

For 2017, training and exams will be available only through the NGICP founding partner organizations. Plans are underway to offer additional NGICP training sessions and exams in the spring and fall. The first exam date in 2017 is set for June 6 and the second in November (specific date TBD).

National debut

In 2018, NGICP will celebrate another milestone: the national launch of the program. This expansion will broaden the partnership and enable other utilities and municipalities to join. Affiliate partners could include nongovernmental organizations, workforce centers, government entities, trainers, and training providers who share a common goal of developing a of GI workforce.

Through this nationwide program certified individuals can set foot on long-term and sustainable path for living wage jobs — often in dense, urban areas where such opportunities can be scarce. By design, these are the same communities where utilities are investing in GI projects.

NGICP will help to ensure a beneficial cycle of employment, water quality improvement, and community development. The workers benefit from employment. The utilities benefit from low-impact, distributed stormwater management. The community benefits from the ancillary advantages of GI such as more green spaces and neighborhood beautification as well as air quality and habitat improvements.

For more background on NGICP as well as the latest news, visit www.ngicp.org.

Pallavi Raviprakash, Technical Programs Manager at WEF has provided technical support on several stormwater initiatives at WEF. She has been involved with the development and management of the NGICP. She has over ten years of experience working in the water resource field, both in the private consulting and non-profit worlds, and holds a bachelor's and master's degree in Environmental Engineering.

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National Green Infrastructure Certification Program Founding Partners

- DC Water, Washington D.C
- Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), Wisconsin
- Montgomery County, Maryland

- Kansas City Water Services Department, Missouri
- Fairfax County, Virginia
- City of Baltimore Department of Public Works, Maryland
- Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District, Kentucky
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, California
- Capital Region Water, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, Illinois
- New Orleans Delegation, Louisiana
- Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Boston Water and Sewer Commission, Massachusetts