



CECAB Approvals Board

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CCHREI: Key issues related to 'qualified specialist' definition

Background

Provincial governments across the nation are taking strides to develop a definition for 'qualified specialists' for the purpose of environmental work. There are significant impacts to environmental practitioners and challenges for the regulatory body associated with implementing guidelines that define a person's ability to practice in the environment sector. The following summary provides an outline of the key issues for consideration in the development of the definition of 'qualified specialist'

Key Issues

Competency-Based

Qualification to conduct environmental work should be defined based on specific accumulated environmental skills, knowledge and experience measured relative to a validated national occupational standard. These competencies must be identifiable, quantifiable and verifiable.

Accountability

Qualified practitioners must be accountable for their technical, professional and ethical conduct. Mechanisms for building accountability include removing designations and limiting scope of practice. These mechanisms must be supported by a code of ethics and transparent discipline framework.

Multidisciplinary

Canada's environment industry draws its strength and capability for innovation from its multidisciplinary composition. Regulatory frameworks must reflect this diversity, remaining inclusive for competent and experienced practitioners from all disciplines.

Continuous Learning

The environment sector within Canada is currently evolving, and the practitioners within the industry must continue to upgrade their skills to keep pace. The regulatory framework must mandate continuous professional development as a means of maintaining competency.

Scalability

Qualification regimes must be scalable, providing structure for the development of qualified human resources when applied across multiple industries and environmental issues. In turn, this offers the opportunity for a provincial solution to be extended across other jurisdictions, preventing the creation of artificial interprovincial boundaries; limiting the market efficiency and potential for innovation within Canada's environment industry.

Independence

The organization(s) responsible for the development, maintenance and implementation of the mechanism(s) for defining 'qualified specialists' must maintain its independence. It must remain agile to react to the needs of industry and regulatory bodies, yet not be viewed as partial to either body or to any individual stakeholder group.



Applicability of CCEP to the definition of qualified specialists

The certification program offered through the Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board (CECAB) provides a rigorous, specialized approach, meeting the objectives of the 'qualified specialist' program. The following sections outline how Canadian Certified Environmental Practitioner (CCEP) certification is applicable for the qualification of specialist under Alberta Environment's Upstream Oil and Gas Reclamation and Remediation Program:

Competency-based evaluation of relevant skills, knowledge and experience

In order to attain CCEP certification, the applicant is evaluated, relative to the National Occupational Standards for Environmental Employment (NOS), to ensure that they possess the specific environmental competencies required in their fields of practice. The NOS provides a rigorous, nationally validated benchmark of the skills, knowledge and experience relevant for practice within the environment sector. The NOS is maintained by CCHREI under a continuous revision cycle

Accountability for competent and ethical environmental practice

Applicants that meet the prescribed standards, and are approved by the CECAB Board, must sign the CECAB Code of Ethics. The CECAB Code of Ethics is an amalgamation of the core elements of the codes of ethics from a variety of professional organizations. The declaration states that the practitioner agrees to uphold the highest standards of competent and ethical environmental practice within their subsectors of specialization. The Code of Ethics is supported through a transparent disciplinary process under the direction of a discipline committee.

Inclusive to practitioners from across the multi-disciplinary environment sector

CCEP serves to highlight the practitioner's specific environmental competencies in addition to the education and employment eligibility requirements. This inclusive approach to certification allows access by practitioners from all sectors of the environment industry whereby all applicants must meet a common standard of competency to achieve certification in a given subsector.

Commitment to on-going professional development

In order to maintain CCEP certification, practitioners must maintain annual records of professional development demonstrating that they have met the minimum annual requirement of 150 professional development credits. These credits can be earned through a combination of practice, formal and informal training, and contributions to the industry through mentorship and service with associations. Every fifth year, CCEPs must be re-certified by completing the certification process in its entirety. The combination of on-going professional development and re-certification ensures that the practitioner maintains their competencies.

Accessible and scalable certification systems

CECAB's online system for CCEP certification is founded on the National Occupational Standards for Environmental Employment, ensuring rigor, scalability and cross-jurisdictional applicability. The certification system is scalable nationally, providing streamlined access to the certification process from anywhere. The Canadian Environmental Auditing Association (CEAA) and Association of Professional Environmental Auditors (APEA) have both recognized CECAB's online system as being a more efficient and effective means for certification.

Independent, professionally autonomous board

The composition of the CECAB Board reflects the diversity of practitioners within the environment sector illustrated through their affiliations with a cross-section of professional associations. As such, the CCEP certification was built on the discipline-plus model, ensuring that professional associations with right-to-title and right-to-practice maintain their function. In practice this means that practitioners must list the sum of their environmental qualifications when presenting themselves as a CCEP.