



CECAB
Canadian Environmental
Certification Approvals Board
Bureau canadien de reconnaissance
professionnelle des spécialistes
de l'environnement
BCRPSE

National certification program for Canadian environmental practitioners

The **Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board (CECAB)** launched in 2000 a national certification program that formally recognizes the environmental competencies of those who work in the environmental sectors. The certification is based on a practitioner's ability to do certain environmental work activities, to have sufficient experience doing them and being able to perform them competently. The assessment is done by comparing the candidate's competencies to those listed in Canada's national occupational standards for environmental employment. Developed in consultation with thousands of environmental practitioners, the standards cover the multidisciplinary work done in the various employment sectors dealing with the protection of the environment, the conservation and preservation of natural resources, as well as environmental education, communications and research.

The certification program is aimed at practitioners who have more than five years of work experience in the environment. Those who successfully undergo the CECAB certification process are granted the **Canadian Certified Environmental Practitioner (CCEP)** designation. Recent graduates can enroll in the Canadian Environmental Specialist-in-Training (CEPIT) program while they develop the required experience.

About CECAB...

CECAB was established in 1998 by the Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environment Industry (CCHREI) in order to develop, implement and administer a national, voluntary certification program for Canadian environmental practitioners. Representing key environmental stakeholders from across the country, the thirteen Board members are responsible, overall, for the administration of the certification program and procedure. They also ensure the respect of CECAB's code of ethics, the application of disciplinary measures when required and oversee the professional development of CCEPs.

As for CCHREI, it is a not-for-profit organization created in 1993 to assist the Canadian environmental sectors in implementing sound human resources development policies. Created by the federal government through its sectoral partnership initiative, CCHREI's mandate includes the development and maintenance of national occupational standards pertaining to environment employment. Completed in 1999, these standards, which represent the needs of industry in terms of human resources, are now used as reference by many universities, community colleges, technical institutes and cégeps that offer environmental training across Canada. The standards have also turned out to be invaluable tools in fostering the continued development of a well trained, highly effective environmental workforce - a key contributor to Canada's future prosperity, well-being and international competitiveness. It should be noted that CCHREI has been assessed by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) under the ISO Guide 61 standard pertaining to the requirements for the accreditation of certification/registration bodies.



Why a certification program?

CECAB was established because certification has been deemed the most effective way to implement the series of national occupational standards developed by CCHREI in order to foster the development of a highly skilled environmental workforce.

Although occupational standards are voluntary, their introduction to the workplace greatly benefits both employers and employees. Occupational standards help companies and individuals plan their skills development and maintain their competencies. Canada's young people also benefit by gaining more opportunities to develop solid skills. By harmonizing environmental training across Canada through national skills standards, CCHREI has helped increase the mobility of young workers and has better enabled the environmental sector to work with educators and governments to address its human resource needs.

Indeed, the setting of standards and certification programs raise the level of skills and competencies of a workforce in a given sector, thereby increasing the number of qualified workers and investment in productivity. Business leaders have come to realize that, in a competitive era, the right investments in people pay off in better products, better services and better workplaces. The end-results are more satisfied customers and an industry with skilled people who can get the job done.

The environment industry is one of Canada's most dynamic sectors and is estimated to be among the top five employment areas in the Canadian economy. At present, the Canadian environment industry still derives the majority of its revenues from the supply of services. This industry's competitive advantage therefore lies largely in the knowledge of its workforce. Implementing occupational standards (via certification) is one of the strategies that will enable the Canadian environment industry to successfully trade on the domestic and international markets.

Studies completed throughout the last decade have indicated that employers have had difficulties finding personnel with the skills and knowledge they require. The environmental sector is strongly multidisciplinary and the work can vary considerably from employers to employers. Recruiting environmental personnel can be a complicated task. All are looking for "good" scientists (e.g., biologists, chemists, engineers, geologists, technologists, etc.) with proven expertise in the environmental area. The implementation of a certification program for environmental practitioners will therefore facilitate the hiring of new employees. It provides employers with a means to improve human resource planning and foster the development of the workforce.

Caring for the environment has become a daily concern. Not only is the public demanding a high degree of environmental stewardship, but so are governments, and the banking, insurance and legal industries. Requirements and expectations are complex when it comes to environmental management. We therefore need an environmental workforce who is highly competent and can help care for the environment, increasing our ability to protect Canada's natural resources.

One of the key aspects of CECAB's certification program is that, when granted, the CCEP designation is linked to the employment subsector(s) under which a candidate has been assessed. This is a key component of the Code of Ethics to which all CCEPs without exception must abide. The granting of the CCEP designation does not relieve certified practitioners from having to respect the areas of professional practice as recognized in Canada and abroad. Environmental practitioners who become certified and belong to other professional associations are also bound by their code of ethics.



National and voluntary...

National and voluntary – these are two key features of CECAB's certification program. The program is voluntary because CECAB does not want to artificially constraint the access to the environmental workplace or the mobility of its workforce. CECAB does not intend to seek legal status such as licensure, right to title as professional organizations. By developing a program which is national in scope, CECAB has ensured that all environmental practitioners, regardless of where they live, can have access to its certification. This also increases the strength of the certification and promotes its recognition in the labour market.

Why become certified?

- ✓ To obtain an official recognition of your ability to perform environmental work.
- ✓ To make sure that your competencies meet Canada's environmental employment standards and ensure that you compare to other professionals involved in your sector.
- ✓ To demonstrate your commitment toward the protection of the environment and competent environmental practice.
- ✓ To facilitate the access to challenging employment opportunities and improve career advancement prospects.
- ✓ To improve the portability of your competencies from one employer to another.
- ✓ To enhance your ability to relocate across the country as the CCEP designation serves as a benchmark in the recognition of environmental competencies and expertise.
- ✓ To stand out professionally and increase the marketability of your qualifications.
- ✓ To have access to a distinctive market advantage for self-employed practitioners.

But the best reason is, in our opinion, the practical assistance that CECAB will provide to environmental practitioners in planning their professional development activities. Using the practitioners' individual skill profile as a reference, CECAB will be able to recommend to each CCEP the competencies that he or she should refresh in order to keep up to date on an annual basis. CECAB can do this because 1) its certification is based on documented competencies and 2) the electronic medium makes it possible to manage an unlimited number of skill profiles.

How does the program work?

CECAB has developed a certification program that can be almost entirely completed electronically through the Internet. CECAB uses interactive Web technology and email-based communications to exchange information with those seeking certification. The access to the e-profiling system, which is used to document and assess the competencies of practitioners, is control by sets of individual user ID and passwords. CECAB's website has been programmed to ensure the security and confidentiality of the data provided by candidates.

The certification process consists of four main (4) steps:

- **Step 1 — Registration and Application:** The candidate fills out an online application which provides CECAB with information about his/her education, employment history and professional affiliation(s). The candidate also indicates which credential he or she is seeking (CCEP or CEPIT) and chooses the environmental employment subsector(s) in which he or she specializes. Upon receiving application documentation and payment, CECAB verifies that the candidate meets the requirements and allows the candidate to proceed to the second step.



- **Step 2 — Online Competency Assessment:** Using CECAB's e-profiling system, the candidate completes an online self-assessment of his or her competencies by reviewing the different environmental competencies associated with the subsector(s) for which he/she seeks certification. The candidate is asked to indicate whether or not he or she possesses certain competencies, how much experience he/she has with these competencies, the level of capability attained, and the last time he or she used them. This enables CECAB to establish your skill profile and evaluate it, electronically, against CCHREI's national occupational standards for environmental employment.
- **Step 3 — Peer Evaluation:** Once CECAB has established that the candidate meets or exceeds CCHREI's standards, it verifies his or her skill profile with three of his or her peers and colleagues who are familiar with, and are able to attest to, the environmental competencies identified in the self-assessment.
- **Step 4 — CECAB Board Review:** Provided that the candidate successfully complete the previous three steps, CECAB issues a certificate by which it grants the Canadian Certified Environmental Practitioner (CCEP) credential. CECAB adds the practitioner's name to the CCEP register, which is found on its website at www.cecab.org.

The certification procedure developed by CECAB is rigorous, yet still simple and accessible. Environmental practitioners do not have to attend any meetings or courses or exams. The majority of the steps are completed via the Internet at their own pace either at home or at work. The list of competencies is extensive and reflective of the current environmental employment market. The standards that CECAB uses as certification criteria were developed in consultation with thousands of experienced environmental practitioners from across the country.

The use of interactive internet technologies, combined with a sophisticated electronic data management system, have enabled CECAB to program a highly detailed and rigorous analysis procedure. While the criteria vary from subsector to subsector, the evaluation procedure is the same for all practitioners. This ensures the impartiality and fairness of the certification program. By using a competency-based approach combined with a formal attestation by peers who are familiar with the candidates' competencies, CECAB has managed to eliminate the need for approval committees whose expertise and knowledge are not always sufficient to properly evaluate candidates.

Furthermore, CECAB recognizes that the work done in the environment sectors is dynamic and constantly evolving. Changes in technology, regulations and processes are the norm, not the exception. Because it has deemed that the maintenance of the environmental competencies is essential, CECAB sees ongoing professional development as a requirement for the maintenance of the CCEP certification on an annual basis, in addition to paying the annual dues.

What are the certification requirements?

To become a Canadian Certified Environmental Practitioner and obtain the CCEP credential, you must:

- Have completed formal post-secondary education in a Canadian institution or have acceptable academic and/or experiential equivalencies, subject to CECAB's approval.
- Have acquired a minimum of five years of relevant environmental work experience while working in Canada. You must be able to substantiate your work experience through reference letters should CECAB require such evidence. Practitioners who do not have the required Canadian work experience will have to enroll, first, in the CEPIT program.
- Possess a profile of environmental competencies, skills and knowledge that meet or exceed the requirements documented in CCHREI's occupational standards for environmental employment.
- Successfully undergo CECAB's online certification process in one or more of CCHREI's environmental employment subsectors. Please note that the competency assessment is done at two levels depending on the level of education achieved, at either technician/technologist level or at the university graduate level.



- Provide a list of three peer evaluators who can, and will accept to, attest of your environmental competencies.
- Agree to abide by CECAB's Code of Ethics.
- Submit all required documentation (including academic transcripts) and pay the application fees.
- Accept to meet CECAB requirements for professional development in order to maintain your CCEP certification on an annual basis.

Requirements for the CEPIT program

To enroll in the Canadian Environmental Practitioner-In-Training (CEPIT) program, you must:

- Have graduated from a Canadian post-secondary educational institution or have acceptable academic and/or experiential equivalencies, subject to CECAB's approval.
- Provide a list of three individuals that will accept to give a reference.
- Agree to abide by CECAB's Code of Ethics.
- Undergo CECAB's online assessment process in one or more of CCHREI's environmental employment subsectors.
- Submit all required documentation (including academic transcripts) and pay the application fees.

How much will it cost?

- \$150 CCEP online application, competency assessment and peer evaluation.
You can apply for certification in a maximum of two subsectors with the initial \$150 application. An extra \$50 fee will be charged for each additional subsector.
- \$100 CCEP annual renewal fee
- \$125 CCEP five-year re-assessment fee (mandatory for CCEPs)
- \$50 CEPIT online application and assessment (two subsectors maximum)
- \$50 CEPIT annual renewal fee
- \$100 Upgrading to the CCEP designation (from CEPIT), subject to re-assessment and peer evaluation.

Please note that the fees listed above may be subject to change.

Want to know more?

We encourage you to join us in this exciting new endeavour. Becoming a CCEP will demonstrate to your employer, your clients, your colleagues and professional associates that your environmental skills and knowledge meet Canada's national occupational standard for environmental employment. Becoming a CCEP will also give you the competitive advantage you need to remain successful, professionally, in today's marketplace. For more information, check our website at www.cecab.org or contact us at:

CECAB – Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board

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