



ABC President Jenny Chambers is joined by AWWA Representative Chuck Van Der Kolk (left) and WEF Representative David Flowers (right) as she signs the MOU.

ABC SIGNS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH AWWA & WEF

ABC leadership joined two other important industry organizations for the signing of a document representing a commitment of working together to continue protection of our world's most precious resource.

"It is with honor we join the American Water Works Association and Water Environment Federation to renew our Memorandum of Understanding," said Jenny Chambers, ABC President.

Established in 1972 with funding from both WEF and AWWA, over the years ABC has partnered with the organizations on numerous efforts. The MOU further defines the partnership, and serves as a document pledging support to each organization's initiatives.

In addition to working together on activities which better the industry, David Flowers, WEF representative, and Chuck Van Der Kolk, AWWA representative, serve as vot-

WHAT'S INSIDE

This edition of *The Certifier* holds the latest in certification news and events, including:

- 2 Standardized & Customized & The Important Role of Psychometrics
- 3 The Benefits of Volunteering
- 5 AMP VIP Client Portal: Easy Access to Important Numbers

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ing members of ABC's Board of Directors. Both Flowers and Van Der Kolk were present as the document was signed.

"We see our long standing relationship with both organizations as critical in serving our member programs," said Chambers.

A copy of the ABC/WEF/AWWA Memorandum of Understanding is available on the member section of www.abccert.org.

ABC Calls on Volunteers for Exam Passing Score Study

ABC is seeking volunteers to participate in cut score studies that will determine the passing scores of its newly developed standardized Water Treatment, Wastewater Treatment, Collection, and Distribution certification exams. Volunteers will earn eight hours of continuing education approved for renewal of their ABC certification. ABC is conducting a member survey to determine program opinions on ABC offering continuing education credit to opera- (Volunteers continued on page 6)

VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS:

- Be a certified Water Treatment, Wastewater Treatment, Collection, or Distribution Operator at a level equivalent to ABC's Class I, II, III, or IV certification.
- Sign a non-disclosure agreement.
- Commit to participation in each of the cut score study activities.
- Participants will earn continuing education for renewal of their ABC certification, and will be entered into a gift card drawing.

Exam Development Series:

STANDARDIZED & CUSTOMIZED & THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF PSYCHOMETRICS

Two words commonly heard when discussing examinations? Standardized and customized. Two words commonly misunderstood? Standardized and customized.

As development continues of new standardized exams following a re-validation study conducted in late 2010, ABC is answering many questions fueled by the misunderstanding of these terms. In this article of the *Exam Development Series*, ABC offers insight on this topic as programs decide what's best for their testing and certification program.

The Basics

ABC Standardized Exams - During national exam development workshops subject matter experts from each exam cate-

gory work together to review and select the questions that will appear on standardized exams. Two forms of the exam are developed to be used for a two-year period.

ABC staff and technical Validation and Examination (V&E) Committees monitor the performance of standardized examination questions and examinee comments throughout the term of their use to identify and address any issues. Clients using this option are assured that they are always using the most updated version of exam questions. Since it was developed through a well-documented examination development process, clients can be assured that this exam is valid, reliable, fair and legally defensible. With standardized exams, ABC maintains documentation of the design, development and analysis of the exam.

ABC Customized Exams - The customized option allows programs to create an exam unique to their program and is tailored to specific technology and regulatory requirements. It typically is a combination of questions developed during ABC's exam development process, and program-specific questions. With a customized exam, member programs are responsible for selecting the questions that will appear on the customized exam and ensuring that the customized exam is valid and meets any applicable legal requirements.

(Exam Development continued on page 6)



THE FACTS: STANDARDIZED & CUSTOMIZED

What does each exam type measure? How do you select an exam that's best for your program? Read below for some fast facts on ABC's standardized and customized exams.

	STANDARDIZED	CUSTOMIZED
Question Development	Questions are developed based on a national Job Task Analysis conducted by ABC's staff and psychometric partners, Professional Testing, Inc. Questions have gone through a QA process to verify compliance with ABC's <i>Item Writing Guidelines</i> .	Questions used are developed by certification programs. Questions may or may not be based on a job analysis. A customized exam may include ABC questions only, your program's questions only, or a combination of ABC and your program's questions.
Psychometrics	Exam developed is considered psychometrically sound because its creation has followed a well documented formal test development process.	Programs select some or all of the exam questions, and are responsible for maintaining question validity and reliability, and the legal defensibility of the exam as a whole.
Measurement	Questions are selected to assess the overall body of knowledge, skills, and abilities that an operator should possess to perform their job successfully. The content of each exam is based on results of the Job Task Analysis.	Questions are related to those regulatory requirements or state/provincial tasks identified as important by a program. The proportion of questions on each topic differs from those established during the Job Task Analysis.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Programs wishing to use a standardized exam and include additional questions can do so by selecting the "Program-Specific Module" option which allows adding a section of 10 or 20 questions to the 100 point standardized exam. **Read the above article to learn more.**

The Benefits of Volunteering

Brian Thorburn, ABC V&E Council Director, shares some of his most important lessons from serving in various volunteer roles.

For those curious about what happens behind the scenes of ABC's Validation and Examination (V&E) process, I can relate. Four years ago I packed my bags and headed to my first ABC Water Treatment V&E Committee meeting, not knowing quite what to expect.

I had readied myself for a two-day session of meetings where I would join other subject matter experts to be an important part of ABC's examination development, but stepping into the meeting room and glancing around, I had no idea my involvement would eventually expand to serving as a committee chair, then as a member of the Board of Directors.

Although my involvement has been primarily with the Water Treatment V&E Committee, there are eight other committees comprised of subject matter expert volunteers including Water Treatment, Wastewater Treatment, Collection, Distribution, Laboratory Analyst, Plant Maintenance, Industrial Waste, Cross-Connection Control and Bio-solids Land Application.

ABC's committees are filled with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who can be either operators, trainers, regulators or certifiers. They represent some of the best and brightest in their field and I've found that each brings a similar passion and dedication for their industry.

So why get involved? After serving, I've found a host of reasons other SMEs should consider joining an ABC committee.

BETTER UNDERSTAND EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT

While serving on an ABC V&E Committee, SMEs receive training on the science behind examination development through sessions at meetings and webinars. After learning the necessary background information, we roll up our sleeves and go to work on various tasks including reviewing exam questions, assembling a Job Task Analysis, or assisting in a cut score study.

PROVIDE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Committee members provide important perspective on what questions, topics or tasks are relevant in the industry today. While some questions are industry mainstays, others need to be reviewed and updated to be relevant to today's operations.

ASSIST IN DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM CHILDREN

Throughout the year, committee members will be shown questions of concern that have been flagged during an exam. Sometimes questions are kept unchanged but often, a distractor is changed, the question is re-written or the difficulty level does not match the exam. Committee members provide valuable insight and expertise during this review.

SHARE YOUR EXPERTISE

With technology and regulations changing, the V&E members must keep up with the times. New technologies over the last 15 years in water treatment and other fields have brought about some new questions on the operator exams. The only problem that new technologies present is that there must be a reference to the new technology in study material. It can take up to a number of years for the new technology to be updated in a course manual or study guide.

As with many volunteer opportunities, by serving on an ABC V&E committee, you may find that you receive more than you give. I encourage you to consider how you may be able to serve on an ABC V&E or Board Committee.

GET INVOLVED

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SERVING ON A COMMITTEE, CONTACT ABC:

Lorrie Banks, ABC Office & Volunteer Coordinator: lbanks@abccert.org or (515) 232-3623

A Few Quick NUMBERS

Going GREEN?

Recently ABC conducted a member survey on Operator Certification and Green Jobs.

Of the 35 operator certification programs who participated, 58 percent said

their state approves training in "green practices"

(energy management, green infrastructure, etc.) for continuing education for licensing operators.

58

Sharing Information

ABC's May webinar discussing Web-Based Testing included attendance from 26 program member representatives. Additional webinars are scheduled for 2011.

26

Fast Results

In May, ABC's Testing Clients enjoyed quick receipt of examinee scores. Scoring packages were returned within an average of two business days.

2

Eddy has Served Member Programs & Testing Clients for Over 11 Years

Most Friday evenings during the summer you'll find ABC's Exam Development Coordinator leaving work and traveling to Lake Okoboji in Northwest Iowa. Ann Eddy, who lives in nearby Huxley with her husband Lee, children Adam (17) and Paige (20), has been a member of ABC's staff for over 11 years and says she's enjoyed working with ABC's clients and members.

"One of my favorite aspects of my job is the opportunity to assist our members and clients with their programs, many of whom I've worked with for many years," she shared.

Ann's role includes processing and mailing exam orders, assisting with various testing department activities and working with Web and Computer-Based testing clients.

"ABC is a great association to work for. I enjoy what I do, and the role that I play in the organization."

In her spare time Ann is an avid runner, and during the winter she rarely misses a game of the ISU women's basketball team. In addition, you can find her cheering on her 6'11" son who runs cross country and plays basketball and baseball for the Ballard Bombers. She also enjoys running races with Paige who this fall will be a junior studying Education at Buena Vista University.



Ann can be reached at aeddy@abccert.org.

ABC HIGHLIGHTS

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Overview

On April 28-30, ABC hosted a Strategic Planning Committee meeting in Ankeny, Iowa, home of the Association's new headquarters. Led by a professional facilitator, the committee spent several days discussing the strategic direction and vision of ABC. Highlights of the meeting are as follows:

Accreditation of ABC's Certification Program – The committee discussed the current exploration of accreditation through ANSI/ISO 17024, and what that might mean for ABC.

When discussing this initiative, the committee noted several points:

- Accreditation by an internationally-recognized body could provide tremendous value to members and clients.
- Obtaining accreditation ensures that ABC is doing everything possible to offer an examination that is fair and reliable, and legally defensible – both for ABC Certification candidates and program members utilizing standardized examinations.
- This initiative assists ABC in continuing to advance our mission.
- ABC's Board of Directors discussed this initiative at the June Board of Directors meeting. The Board strongly values member input, and encourages members to contact their Division Directors with any questions or concerns.

Strategic Plan Development – Committee members Kim Dyches, Utah (Chair); Laurie Sharp, (Iowa); Brian Thorburn (British Columbia); Brent Herring (Rhode Island); Jenny Chambers (Montana); Chuck Van Der Kolk (AWWA); Gayle Lammers (Colorado); Chip Mackey (New Hampshire); John Solvie (Nevada); Margaret Doss (Georgia) and Harris Seidel (IWEA) discussed all areas of ABC's structure as they developed a draft strategic plan. ABC's Board of Directors reviewed and approved the plan at the June 11, Board of Directors meeting in Alexandria, Virginia. Looking back on the meeting, committee members agreed the time was well spent and productive for ABC's member programs.

Submit ABC Award Nominations by June 30

ABC's Awards Committee is seeking nominations to recognize the efforts of ABC members, volunteer board and committee members, and others who advance environmental certification. Nominations may be made by the Association's members, by members of the Association's Board of Directors, by training and/or certification committees of AWWA and WEF and their local sections or associations, or by similar organizations actively involved in training and/or certification. Nominations shall be in writing and shall describe the nominee's

contributions that warrant consideration for the award.

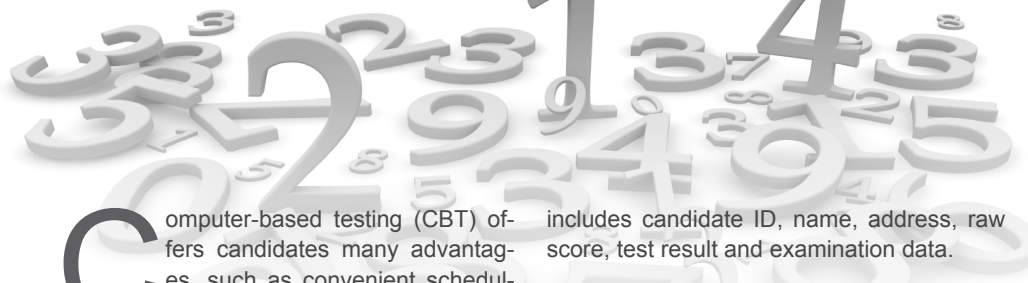
Please use the official [ABC award nomination form](#) and include a resume of the nominee's professional and community activities or program accomplishments. **Nominations must be received by the ABC office by June 30, 2011 to be considered for the awards.**

Annual Conference Call for Presentations

As the kickoff event of a yearlong celebration honoring 40 years of serving as the only organization created solely as a resource for environmental certification authorities, the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) will host its 25th Annual Conference, Excellence & Innovation, Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow, Jan. 17-20, 2012, in Tampa, Fla.

ABC's Annual Conference Committee announces its Call for Presentations for the conference technical program which serves as a format for collaboration and information exchange among certifiers. **The deadline to submit a presentation application for consideration is July 1.**

AMP VIP CLIENT PORTAL: Easy Access to Important Numbers



Computer-based testing (CBT) offers candidates many advantages, such as convenient scheduling and instant score reporting. It also provides the testing sponsor with a steady stream of data about their candidates' performance. Harnessing that data can be an overwhelming task for staff new to the CBT experience. ABC's CBT testing partner, Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP) provides all jurisdictions with 24/7 secure, online access to the VIP Client Portal to help sort and report all this data. The AMP VIP Client Portal provides useful tools to analyze examination data and can be used to address short term problems (e.g., as a resource to answer candidate questions) and formulate long range goals (e.g., monitor candidate performance to assist in determining future test form development).

Accessing the AMP VIP Client Portal is simple. AMP will provide your jurisdiction with secure ID numbers and passwords for requested staff members. Then visit www.goAMP.com and click on VIP Portal. After logging in, you can choose *Reports* and be taken to a screen with a list of your jurisdiction's reports and a description of each. The system is designed to be user-friendly and uses recognizable, web-based technology so anyone can query reports and retrieve data. A help screen which details the portal layout and functionality is also available after you log in. Reports can be viewed on-screen, exported to PDF format for saving and printing, or exported to Excel or CSV format for transfer into other systems. AMP will also continue providing a post exam data export file if needed.

The following reports are provided with query capability by date range and examination type, putting the power of data management into your hands.

Results Roster

The Results Roster provides data regarding pass, fail or absent status of tested candidates for a specified date range. This report

includes candidate ID, name, address, raw score, test result and examination data.

Results Summary (Pass/Fail/Absent Summary)

The Results Summary report offers a summary of passing/failing candidates and an overall look at the performance of each examination by date range. This can be used to track performance from year to year or support new training initiatives.

Scheduled Candidates

One of the challenges when transitioning to CBT is adjusting to the continuous flow of candidates. The Scheduled Candidates report provides the data and location that candidates are scheduled to attempt an examination during a specified date range. This can help track how quickly candidates are deciding to move through the process following their eligibility period.

Unscheduled Candidates

The Unscheduled Candidates report provides a list of eligible candidates who have not yet scheduled an examination appointment. This will allow your staff to send reminders to test or notices of eligibility expiration if needed to move candidates through the process.

Don't see the data you need on this list? Contact AMP to discuss a new report with the specific data needed for your jurisdiction. The AMP VIP Client Portal also provides secure data transfer between AMP and each jurisdiction. For example, jurisdiction staff members can post files of eligible candidates to the VIP Client Portal and the appropriate AMP staff member will receive notification that new eligible candidates are waiting for import. AMP also uses their portal to transfer examination data directly to ABC, allowing ABC to monitor item and test form performance.

We encourage you to take advantage of the data available for your testing program. Need help? Just contact AMP for a demonstration

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ABC RESOURCES

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Scoring: scoring@abccert.org

Certification:
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www.abccert.org

Certification Committee Meeting - June 10, 2011; Alexandria, VA

Board of Directors Meeting - June 11, 2011; Alexandria, VA

AWWA ACE 11 Annual Conference & Exposition - June 12-16, 2011; Washington, D.C.

Deadline to Submit ABC Award Nominations - June 30, 2011

Deadline to receive ABC Annual Conference Presentation Application - July 1, 2011

ABC Office Closed for Independence Day - July 1 and July 4, 2011

Webinar: ABC Strategic Initiatives - September 2011

ABC Office Closed for Labor Day - September 5, 2011

For the most current information, visit [ABC's Online Calendar >>](#)

(Exam Development continued from page 2)

What's the real difference between standardized and customized?

This question can be answered in one word: psychometrics. While the exam questions on a customized exam are likely developed through the same process as those appearing on a standardized exam, the combination of questions on a standardized exam as a whole have followed the formal test development process:

- **Job/Task Analysis Study**
- **Exam Blueprint Development**
- **Item Development**
- **Exam Form Development**
- **Pilot Testing**
- **Passing Score Study**
- **Administration**
- **Periodic Review**

The questions identified and included on a standardized exam have been carefully selected and are determined to accurately test the depth, breadth and scope of the items a competent operator should know.

A customized exam may include some of the same items, but clients are ultimately

responsible for the development of the questions, and legal defensibility of the exam. This is because the inclusion of region-specific questions within the set of 100 items causes the proportion of items about each topic on a customized exam to vary from those specified by the standardized blueprint.

My program includes state/provincial specific questions on its exam. If an operator passes our exam, can't we be assured they have competence in those areas?

If a program's passing score is 70%, and a 100 point exam contains 30 program-specific questions, a candidate could miss every question pertaining to a task specific to the state/province in which they are seeking certification and still pass the exam.

Standardized is not an option for my program because of regulatory requirements.

Often programs are at the mercy of state and provincial regulations which require their exams to include program-specific questions. In this situation, programs are encouraged to talk with ABC and discuss ways an exam can be tailored to the individual program needs.

An excellent option is to consider adding a section of program-specific questions (10 or 20) to the 100-point standardized exam. Programs can select questions they feel are important for an operator in their region to know. ABC can provide separate scores for the additional section so certifiers are able to assess strong and weak areas of performance on both the standardized and region-specific content. This is a new "Program-Specific Module" option.

By using a standardized exam, operator certification programs can more easily grant reciprocity as incoming operators who are licensed in other states using a standardized exam only need to be tested on the region-specific questions for their new state. Certification programs can also use the separate scores to determine which program-specific exam content could benefit from additional training.

As a resource to certification programs, ABC looks forward to the opportunity to visit with certification program administrators and certification boards to discuss which options are best for specific programs.

(Volunteers continued from cover)

tors, who hold certifications or licenses in a state/province/territory. If you have not already, please complete the survey. If you did not receive the survey, please contact ABC. Volunteers will also be entered into a drawing for one of ten \$100 Visa gift cards following completion of the study.

The input of certified operators working in these fields is needed to ensure that ABC certification exams administered across North America appropriately distinguish between candidates who are minimally competent and those who are not. ABC exam development activities are carried out in accordance with industry best practices including ISO/IEC General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons in order to ensure that ABC certification exams are valid, reliable, fair, and legally defensible. In order to meet these standards, ABC needs the assistance of volunteers who represent the depth, breadth, and scope of the industry and must document volunteers' qualifications and backgrounds.

An application to participate will be provided at a later date. Questions? Send an e-mail to certification@abccert.org.

SUBMIT YOUR ABC CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS APPLICATION BY JULY 1!

PRESENTATION TOPICS

- Certification Issues
- Certification Program Success Stories, Lessons Learned & Best Practices
- Certification Program Administration
- International Certification
- Distance/Continuing Education
- Compliance and Enforcement
- Technical Assistance and Training
- Professional Development
- Ethics
- Emerging areas



For more information, visit: www.abccert.org.