

Skill Builders

2017 WECA Skill Builder Program



- **Attend a wide range of education, training, and professional development courses designed specifically for cooperatives.**
- **Take advantage of NRECA certificate, certification, and accreditation programs.**
- **Network with other cooperative leaders, learn from their experiences, and shape the future cooperative movement.**
- **Enhance the effectiveness of member service in your cooperative.**



Constructing the foundation of successful cooperatives.

Credentialed Cooperative Director

The Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) curriculum demonstrates NRECA's commitment to directors, ensuring they have an opportunity to develop the competencies they need to succeed in a new and uncertain environment. The CCD certificate is awarded upon the successful completion of all five CCD courses in the curriculum. The three courses listed will be offered in the 2017 rotation. The remaining two will be offered in 2018.

Directors who have earned their CCD or Board Leadership (BLC) certification may audit courses they have already taken at a 50 percent discount, if space permits. In order to receive the reduced rate, applicants must note this on the registration form prior to attending the program.

DIRECTOR DUTIES AND LIABILITIES

Course 2600 (1¾ credits)

Holiday Inn South | Eau Claire, Wis.
April 11, 2017

Boards are responsible for directing the affairs of the corporation. This course discusses and explains the duties of loyalty, obedience, and due care, and the need for directors to acquire the minimum knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities within the cooperative context.

Key topics:

- An overview of today's multi-billion dollar electric utility business
- The concepts and values that govern cooperatively owned businesses and related types of organizations
- Legal and regulatory concepts affecting public utilities
- Key legal documents such as articles of incorporation and bylaws
- The role of management and guidelines for maintaining an effective relationship with the CEO

All credits mentioned refer to WECA Skill Builder credits, not NRECA credits.

UNDERSTANDING THE ELECTRIC BUSINESS

Course 2610 (1¾ credits)

Holiday Inn South | Eau Claire, Wis.
April 12, 2017

The electric utility industry is an evolving high-tech system that must be designed and engineered to meet regulatory and consumer standards for reliability, quality, and safety. This requires an appropriate investment on a planned and ongoing basis. This course provides directors with an understanding of the key components of the electric utility industry.

Key topics:

- The basic functions and cost components of generation, transmission, and distribution
- Current and emerging technologies that are affecting utility operations and policies
- Issues related to distributed generation that the board may need to address
- How environmental issues and national policies affect the cooperative
- The board's role to ensure a safe working environment

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Course 2630 (1¾ credits)

Holiday Inn South | Eau Claire, Wis.
October 17, 2017

Boards have ultimate responsibility for ensuring and evaluating the long-term health of the organization. They help fulfill this duty through strategic thinking, identifying goals through strategic planning and authorizing the appropriate allocation of resources through the adoption of financial policies, budget review and approval and monitoring management's progress toward strategic goals. This course teaches directors how to participate effectively in strategic thinking and planning processes.

Key Topics:

- The difference between strategic thinking and strategic planning
- Analyzing your cooperative's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Recognizing the board's oversight responsibility
- Using the strategic plan in the annual evaluation of the cooperative's accomplishment and as the foundation of the CEO's performance appraisal

Board Leadership Certificate

The CCD Certificate is a prerequisite for the Board Leadership Certificate (BLC). However, directors do not need to have a CCD certificate in order to enroll in these courses. The BLC certificate is earned by completing a total of 10 NRECA course credits from the NRECA 900-level courses. These courses are designed to be “challenger” workshops on key current issues.

CO-OP BYLAWS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CURRENT ISSUES

Course 925.1 (1½ credits)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
January 10, 2017

With the U.S. electric industry under increased scrutiny from consumers and regulators, electric cooperatives need to make sure their bylaws adequately address new situations: changing membership, “large load” exceptions to some state territorial laws, diversified services, distributed generation, and legislative or regulatory changes. This course will assist co-op directors, CEOs, and their agents undertaking a comprehensive bylaw review and highlight how these changes and challenges will bear on future bylaw revisions.

Key topics:

- Overview of the role of bylaws
- Member issues and expectations
- Director issues and expectations
- Issues affecting co-op operations as not-for-profit corporations
- Revising and amending bylaws

CURRENT GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Course 929.1 (1½ credits)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
January 11, 2017

Policies can help establish the standards of board behavior required for governance in today’s electric cooperative boardroom. This course revisits the fundamentals of governance and how policies contribute to effective governance. Participants discuss issues facing electric cooperatives and as these issues are debated, sample policies illustrate their relevance to today’s governance issues.

Key topics:

- Discussion of current issues facing rural electric cooperative boards, and how policies are coming into play
- A suggested standardized policy structure and format
- A successful approach for reviewing and updating your cooperative’s governing policies

CONVERSATION SKILLS OUTSIDE OF THE BOARDROOM

Course 943.1 (1½ credits)

Clark Electric Cooperative | Greenwood, Wis.
August 1, 2017

Many co-ops are getting member requests for information as the energy industry evolves toward a consumer-centric model. Co-ops are well positioned as their members' trusted energy advisor to provide education and information on the changing energy landscape. While directors are not the co-op's official spokespersons, they are sometimes asked questions by members when they are out in the community. This course provides directors with skills and guidance on how to handle such situations by either responding or referring questions to their co-op's CEO or designated spokesperson. Participants will observe and practice how (or how not) to communicate their co-op's policies, plans, and positions on such timely matters as rates, distributed energy resources, or the benefits of belonging to a consumer-centric cooperative utility.

Key topics:

- Distinguishing the CEO's role as primary spokesperson for the co-op from the director's role in co-op communications efforts.
- Awareness of what is being communicated through body language.
- Effective techniques for referring questions to the CEO or the designated spokesperson.
- Recognizing that anything directors say can be recorded by a smartphone and wind up on the Internet.
- Responding to media inquiries and interviews if and when necessary.

SUCCESSION PLANNING:

DEVELOPING THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION

Course 958.1 (1½ credits)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
October 4, 2017

Board, CEO, and staff succession planning are essential to ensuring tomorrow's purpose-driven organization. Personnel change is inevitable in every organization. Often, such change can be challenging, especially when vacancies occur in leadership positions.

This course focuses on the board's responsibility and role in ensuring that the cooperative has a succession plan in place for the CEO and its overall leadership. Also discussed is the board's role in ensuring that the CEO has a process in place to ensure ongoing development of the organization's workforce potential and a plan to ensure leadership continuity and quality.

All credits mentioned refer to WECA Skill Builder credits, not NRECA credits.

Management Essentials

The Management Essentials Certificate (MEC) Program is designed for experienced supervisors and mid-level managers. The program explores how to maintain technical expertise while demonstrating the right type of leadership. MEC provides the personal, interpersonal, and group skills to be influential in one-on-one situations, facilitate group performance, and become effective leaders. Building on the core skills introduced in the Supervisory Certificate Program, the Management Essentials program further develops critical business and leadership skills. Participants will identify and build on their strengths while improving key weakness areas to get the best results from every member of their team.

ADVANCED WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Course 640.1 (2¼ credits)

Jackson Electric Cooperative | Black River Falls, Wis.
April 5, 2017

One of the downsides of speaking out loud is that you can't take the words back after they are out there for everyone to hear. If you find yourself wanting a "do-over" after you've given directions, made suggestions, asked a question, offered an opinion, or explained something, Advanced Workplace Communication Strategies can help. This course teaches the critical elements of communication and provides opportunities to improve the essential communication skills of observing, listening, asking questions, providing clear instructions, and communicating effectively in cross-cultural team settings.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Develop effective communication skills that enable you to speak interpersonally and in groups.
- Increase your ability to create open communication, listen intently, ask key questions, and respond relevantly.
- Provide clear instructions, suggestions, and explanations orally.
- Communicate with people of different cultures, particularly in small group (team) settings.
- Share difficult but diplomatic messages about expectations, performance, and rules.

All credits mentioned refer to WECA Skill Builder credits, not NRECA credits.

Supervisory Certificate

The NRECA Cooperative Supervisory Certificate (CSC) recognizes the educational development of new or experienced supervisors as well as those who aspire to become supervisors. NRECA's 300-level series covers the range of issues faced by supervisors and builds the skills necessary to address those issues effectively. Upon completion of all nine courses in the curriculum, participants will receive their Cooperative Supervisory Certificates. The nine supervisory courses qualify for Certified Cooperative Communicators and Certified Key Account Executives continuing education requirements.

Morning

**GETTING STARTED AS
A SUPERVISOR**
Course 380.05 (¾ credit)

Afternoon

**PERSONAL TIME
MANAGEMENT**
Course 381.05 (¾ credit)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
March 1, 2017

As a new supervisor you have the added responsibility of overseeing other people's work in addition to getting your own work done. Striking the balance can be challenging and many experienced supervisors say they would do things a little differently if they had a chance to start over as a supervisor. This course will help you, as a newly promoted supervisor, to get it right the first time as you transition into supervision. Course content is presented in a practical way and focuses on understanding the co-op business, helping you clarify roles and responsibilities, gain acceptance as a new supervisor, and create a long-term development plan for continued success.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Differentiate between being an employee and a boss.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of your employees.
- Identify the characteristics of successful work groups.
- Use a variety of techniques for encouraging initiative.

There's only so much time in the day to get everything done and if you could manage your time at work better that would be half the battle. This course will help you to analyze how you currently use your time and teach you to identify time wasters. By implementing a time management system, you'll discover how to better organize information in the co-op workplace and apply a time management tool that works best for you. You'll leave with a plan to tackle next week's to-do list with confidence.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Use time logs to better focus your time.
- Identify and apply tools for personal time management.
- Prioritize tasks so you're concentrating on the most important ones.
- Recognize and deal with time wasters.

Supervisory Certificate

Morning

RESOLVING CONFLICT THROUGH NEGOTIATION

Course 384.05 (¾ credit)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
March 2, 2017

It's not fun when things get ugly and it's even more challenging when you supervise the people who are in disagreement. You may feel like you're stuck in the middle; when in reality, you're actually in charge. Like it or not, conflict with or among employees is likely to arise for all co-op supervisors at some point in their careers. Negotiation is a proven strategy for coming to mutually acceptable agreements in conflict situations. In this course, you'll learn a three-step process to help eliminate potential hostility through effective negotiation.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Gain a new understanding of anger and its effects.
- Recognize your conflict pattern and the patterns of others.
- Address workplace disputes.
- Use a variety of approaches to conflict resolution

Afternoon

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

Course 385.05 (¾ credit)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
March 2, 2017

Have you ever wondered how you can help someone be motivated to contribute more? If they did, what would be the impact on the rest of team? Then again, if they don't get motivated and achieve more, how will that affect the others you supervise? Motivation can lift your employees' level of performance, increase job satisfaction, and promote teamwork. This course will explore the co-op supervisor's role, value, and rewards in motivation. You'll review a self-evaluation tool to help identify your motivational strengths and weaknesses.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Discuss your role in motivating staff at your co-op.
- Explain the value and types of motivation.
- Use motivational techniques for staff of all ages.
- Reinforce the behavior and motivation of your most valuable staff.

All credits mentioned refer to WECA Skill Builder credits, not NRECA credits.

Other Courses and Events

ELECTRIC INDUSTRY UPDATES

(3 credits per co-op or \$1,350/co-op)

Jan. 23, 2017	8–11:45 a.m.	Kalahari Resort Wisconsin Dells
Jan. 23, 2017	1–4:45 p.m.	Ramada White House Lodge Richland Center
Jan. 24, 2017	8–11:45 a.m.	Days Inn Hotel & Conference Center La Crosse
Jan. 25, 2017	8–11:45 a.m.	Holiday Inn South Eau Claire
Jan. 26, 2017	8–11:45 a.m.	Barron Electric Cooperative Barron
Jan. 27, 2017	8–11:45 a.m.	Holiday Inn & Convention Center Stevens Point

Bryan Singletary will conduct a presentation on **Working Together to Meet Our Members' Needs**. Cooperatives are different from other utilities. While all electric suppliers have to deal with changing environmental rules, more energy-conscious consumers, and increased regulatory scrutiny, Cooperatives must do this through a member-focused position. Our unique business model requires us to make service and policy decisions that benefit the members. The challenges we face require all employees to be prepared to deal with the conflicts these issues may raise.

In this session we will go back to our roots and take a cooperative, principled approach to member service. The workshop will focus on how each employee can take a leadership position in providing our members with the service they deserve in these tough times. In this session we will dovetail with the policies and procedures of your utility, but step up the process to reinvigorate employees. We will also work through a series of exercises that develop employee/member conflict management skills for office and field employees.

In particular, we will:

- Define the member service process.
- Provide action steps for dealing with upset members.
- Discuss the unique advantages the cooperative business model provides members.
- Provide each employee with a set of actions for making these advantages real for new and long-time members.
- Conduct role-plays that require each employee present at the session to deal with a member/internal conflict.

WECA President & CEO Steve Freese will update employees on key state and national energy issues, discuss how employees can have a voice in the policy-making process, and talk about the impact of the fall elections.

Other Courses and Events

LEGAL SEMINAR FOR DIRECTORS & EMPLOYEES (1 credit)

Holiday Inn South | Eau Claire, Wis.
February 8, 2017

The Wheeler, Van Sickle & Anderson, S.C. law firm will be conducting a legal seminar for electric cooperative directors, managers/CEOs, and key staff.

Key topics:

- Distributed Generation and Renewable Energy Issues
- Smart Metering: Risks, Contracting, and Other Considerations
- Capital Credits Update, Member Debt, and Bankruptcies
- Current Bylaw Issues
- Membership Agreements—Best Practices
- Independent Contractor Relationships—How to Protect the Cooperative
- Evolving Regulatory Requirements
- Employee Handbooks and Policies—Better Practices
- Other “hot button” issues

RETIREMENT PLANNING SEMINAR

There are no program fees charged by NRECA. Meal and break charges will be billed at cost and divided equally among participants.

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
February 21–22, 2017

The NRECA Retirement Planning Seminar is designed for employees and their spouses who are within 5–10 years of retirement. It helps employees evaluate distribution options from their retirement plans, estimate retirement income and expenses, and realize the need for continued investment during retirement years. Social Security and estate planning are included in the program. Health and long-term care issues are also addressed. *We would like to encourage employees and their spouses who are within 10–20 years of retirement to attend. This will help employees to gauge if they are on the right track for their retirement years.*

Key topics:

- NRECA retirement benefits
- Investment planning/asset allocation
- Social Security
- Health and long-term care
- Retirement distribution strategies
- Legal and estate planning
- Estimating retirement income
- Ins and outs of IRAs

CREDIT ISSUES AND COLLECTIONS WORKSHOP

(1¼ credits)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
March 20, 2017

Collections are truly the most challenging task in your system. You have to collect a delinquent account from a member who is probably already experiencing financial stresses from other collectors, and dealing with “life’s worries.” Combining customer service with the “get-it done” demands of your position is often a great challenge. This program will help you in measuring your collection effectiveness, complying with laws, and maintaining good customer relations. We’ll use a roundtable to compare notes and bring your challenges to the table!

Key topics:

- Roundtable discussion of what’s working and not working at your utility.
- Handling irate customers and dealing with the stresses caused by your job.
- What’s the law say? Anything new?
- Capital credits in collections? New information on class action lawsuits regarding capital credits!

NUTS AND BOLTS OF WORK ORDERS

(2 credits)

Comfort Inn & Suites | Black River Falls, Wis.
March 21–22, 2017*

This workshop is designed for all employees who participate in any part of the plant-construction process. The course stresses the importance of all participants in the process and their eventual effect on the cost of total utility plant and the recovery of its costs through the rates charged to customers. It is written in a “practice-set” approach. Participants will close both construction and retirement work orders. *Course is great for both operations and accounting!*

Key topics:

- Introduction to electric delivery systems
- Differentiate between capital and operating expenses, necessary capital planning elements, and possible financing options
- Understanding the differences: work orders, accounting, and financing
- Discuss the cost elements of a work order system
- Overview of the staking process
- Understand utilization and distribution to plant accounts
- Provide an overview of contracts and the proper forms
- Understand the impact of special equipment on the bottom line
- Overview of continuing property records

* This is a 1½-day program ending by noon on the second day. This course is limited to the first 35 people.

Other Courses and Events

EDUCATION AND LOBBY DAYS

(1 credit)

Concourse Hotel & Governor's Club | Madison, Wis.
March 29–30, 2017

Directors and staff will be briefed on state issues affecting electric cooperatives and the energy industry. The two-day event will feature in-depth presentations, panel discussions with experts, verbal and written background information on legislative proposals, as well as insight into the political atmosphere at the Capitol.

EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATE

(¾ credit)

Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center | Stevens Point, Wis.
May 9, 2017

Cooperatives and their directors want to avoid the vexing and sometimes dangerous potholes appearing on the employment road. State, Federal, and Agency rules often change and can appear contradictory. Cooperative policies and employee handbooks are always a work in progress. Wheeler attorneys can help guide you away from digging those potholes deeper. Join us for a presentation on employee handbooks, best practices, NLRB, contract limitations, and other current and evolving issues.

HR PROFESSIONALS WORKSHOP

(1 credit)

Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center | Stevens Point, Wis.
May 9–10, 2017*

HR issues that are crucial to your co-op's future will be addressed at the ever-popular open forum and legal update. The open forum provides the opportunity to discuss new HR concerns and assist in solving issues you may be experiencing. A legal update will focus on new and changing matters as well as provide information on issues that attorneys are seeing more of lately.

* This is a 1¼-day program. Starting approx. 3 p.m. on May 9 and ending by 4 p.m. on May 10.

EMERGING ENERGY ISSUES SUMMIT

(1 credit)

Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center | Stevens Point, Wis.
August 15, 2017

This program provides co-op directors, CEOs, and staff with timely information about emerging energy issues. This year's summit covered ratemaking trends in the utility industry; advanced metering technologies; community solar trends; national energy issues; and dynamic pricing programs using AMI interval data. We will build on the success of the last four summits to offer another quality program in 2017. Specific topics and speakers will be determined.

ELECTRIC COMMUNICATOR'S WORKSHOP

(1 credit)

Location TBD | Wisconsin Dells/Baraboo Area, Wis.
August 22–23, 2017

Enhance co-op communications by brushing up on basic skills, learning new tricks, and utilizing the latest in technology. Electric co-op communicators will also share ideas and maximize their use of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* magazine to effectively communicate with co-op members. For those interested, we will hold a tour of the *WECN* production process at R.R. Donnelly.

NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION WORKSHOP

(½ credit)

Jackson Electric Cooperative | Black River Falls, Wis.
October 18, 2017

This workshop will provide for new employees an introduction to the history of electric cooperatives; cooperative principles and structure; how electric cooperatives operate; cooperative finance; the role of the G&T in providing power; the competitive pressures and changes in the electric industry today; and support organizations for local cooperatives.

Employees will also hear an electricity 101 presentation; various roles safety plays within electric cooperatives with suggestions for participants to take back to their home co-op; basic duties essential to all employees, focusing on general workplace safety and the well-being of the general public.

NRECA Director Gold Credential

Director Gold is an addition to NRECA's Education Program, neither replacing nor altering any existing credential. Director Gold is the hallmark of directors who have earned the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) and Board Leadership Certificates (BLC) and are committed to continuing education throughout their board service.

Director Gold helps drive professional self-confidence and standing before members, regulators, and elected officials by identifying directors' ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability.

For a director to earn the initial Director Gold Credential, he or she must meet these criteria:

- Hold the CCD and BLC credentials.
- Earn three additional credits from the BLC series of courses. For the initial Director Gold Credential, only BLC courses will be accepted for credit. Upon renewal (every two years), other options including some non-NRECA programs are available.

A total of 13 BLC credits are needed to qualify for Director Gold status. Once eligible, a director must "opt in" by indicating interest in earning Director Gold status before a certificate will be issued. The "opt in" form can be completed at www.cooperative.com.

To maintain Director Gold status, directors must earn three credits from the NRECA-approved list of continuing education programs within a two-year (24 months) period. A minimum of two credits must be earned from the NRECA BLC courses, but directors can choose to earn all three continuing education credits from the BLC series. A maximum of one credit may be earned by attending one of the following conferences or programs:

- NRECA Directors Conference (1 credit)
- CFC Forum (1 credit)
- CoBank Energy Directors Conference (1 credit)
- Mid America Cooperative Council (MACC) Board Chair Roundtable (1 credit)

** NRECA-approved list is subject to change*



2017 Year at a Glance

Jan. 10	Co-op Bylaws: Guiding Principles and Current Issues (BLC)
Jan. 11	Current Governance Issues in Policy Development (BLC)
Jan. 23–27	Electric Industry Updates (Other)

Feb. 8	Legal Seminar for Directors and Employees (Other)
Feb. 21–22	NRECA Retirement Planning Seminar (Other)

March 1	Getting Started as a Supervisor (CSC) Personal Time Management (CSC)
March 2	Resolving Conflict Through Negotiation (CSC) Motivating Employees (CSC)
March 20	Credit Issues and Collections Workshop (Other)
March 21–22	Nuts and Bolts of Work Orders (Other)
March 29–30	WECA Education & Lobby Days (Other)

April 5	Advanced Workplace Communications Strategies (MEC)
April 11	Director Duties and Liabilities (CCD)
April 12	Understanding the Electric Business (CCD)

May 9	Employment Law Update (Other)
May 9–10	HR Professionals Workshop (Other)

August 1	Conversation Skills Outside of the Boardroom (BLC)
August 15	Emerging Energy Issues Summit (Other)
August 22–23	Electric Communicator's Workshop (Other)

October 4	Succession Planning: Developing the Purpose-Driven Organization (BLC)
October 17	Strategic Planning (CCD)
October 18	New Employee Orientation Workshop (Other)

Non-Skill Builder Programs

NRECA Youth Tour

June 9–15, 2017
Washington, D.C.

WECA Youth Leadership Congress

July 26–28, 2017
UW–River Falls, River Falls, Wis.

WECA Board Meetings

February 9, 2017 | Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services, Ellsworth, Wis.

May 11, 2017 | Jackson Electric Cooperative, Black River Falls, Wis.

August 22, 2017 | East Central Energy, Braham, Minn.

WECA District Meetings

July 17, 2017 | District 2
Riverland Energy Cooperative, Arcadia, Wis.

July 18, 2017 | District 3
Barron Electric Cooperative, Barron, Wis.

July 19, 2017 | District 1
Clark Electric Cooperative, Greenwood, Wis.



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