



**WaterSense® Professional Certification Program
Labeling System**

Version 1.0

July 24, 2014

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

WaterSense, a partnership program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), seeks to protect the future of our nation's water supply by offering people a simple way to use less water with water-efficient products, new homes, and programs. To achieve the mission of the WaterSense program, EPA establishes partnerships with interested stakeholders, such as product manufacturers, retailers, builders, water utilities, and other organizations. EPA provides and maintains the WaterSense brand and develops national specifications for water-efficient products, homes, and programs.

The purpose of the *WaterSense Professional Certification Program Labeling System* (program labeling system) is to:

- Define the organizational requirements that professional certifying organizations (PCOs) must meet to earn the WaterSense label for a certification program.
- Define the program roles and responsibilities of the PCOs and WaterSense.
- Outline the application process for PCOs seeking the WaterSense label for a professional certification program.
- Ensure consistency in the evaluation of professional certification programs.
- Ensure a base level of organizational competency regardless of the type of professional certification applying for a WaterSense label.

PCOs can apply for organizational approval in accordance with this program labeling system and the relevant WaterSense specification for professional certification programs (WaterSense program specification). EPA is responsible for determining whether the PCOs meet these general organizational requirements and the requirements specific to each WaterSense program specification.

After EPA has developed a program specification for a given profession, a PCO that is interested in receiving the label for a professional certification program shall apply to EPA with documentation of the organizational requirements outlined in this program labeling system. If those requirements are met, EPA will approve the organization as competent to offer a professional certification program that could qualify to earn the WaterSense label. The PCO will also submit documentation to EPA on the specific program for which the PCO is seeking the label, and EPA will assess the program's conformance to the relevant WaterSense program specification. If conformance is determined, EPA will sign a partnership agreement with the PCO and allow the PCO to use the WaterSense label in conjunction with the respective certification program.

2.0 EFFECTIVE DATE

Version 1.0 of this program labeling system shall be effective on July 24, 2014.

PCOs currently participating in the program shall be in compliance with Version 1.0 of the program labeling system within one year from the effective date of this labeling system or no later than July 24, 2015. Any PCO with an existing WaterSense labeled program that is not in compliance with this program labeling system and does not have a labeled program by the

effective date will be disqualified and shall immediately cease to use the label in conjunction with that certification program as outlined in the *WaterSense Program Guidelines*. Until the effective date of this program labeling system, EPA will continue to approve PCOs to earn the label and label all certification programs in accordance with the existing WaterSense program specifications (i.e., Versions 1.0).

After the effective date, all PCOs wishing to offer WaterSense labeled programs (e.g., new PCOs or those offering certification through a program labeled under one or more of the existing WaterSense program specifications) shall be approved by WaterSense in accordance with this program labeling system and the relevant WaterSense program specification.

3.0 SCOPE

This program labeling system specifies the organizational requirements a PCO shall meet in order to have a professional certification program labeled under one of the WaterSense program specifications. This program labeling system does not apply to certified individuals, but only to the organizations that develop and run the certification programs.

The WaterSense program specifications detail the certification program attributes that shall be in place for a program to earn the WaterSense label. All final specifications, as well as any technical clarifications, are posted on the compendium of program and product specifications located on the [WaterSense website](#).

This program labeling system, WaterSense program specifications, technical clarifications, the *WaterSense Program Guidelines*, and the *WaterSense Program Mark Guidelines* provide the minimum requirements and roles and responsibilities for PCOs and their operation of WaterSense labeled professional certification programs.

4.0 REFERENCES AND DEFINITIONS

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this program labeling system. For any of the referenced documents below, the most recent version applies. References include:

- WaterSense program specifications developed and maintained by EPA and contained in the online compendium.
- *Professional Certifying Organization Partnership Agreement* between EPA and the PCO.
- Applications for professional certification program approval and labeling.
- *WaterSense Program Guidelines* developed and maintained by EPA.
- *WaterSense Program Mark Guidelines* developed and maintained by EPA.
- ISO/IEC 17024, Conformity Assessment—General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons.
- ST10, National Commission for Certifying Agencies' Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs.

The following terms used in this document are defined below:

- **Independent Academic Institution:** A public or private institution dedicated to higher education that grants academic degrees and is independent from the PCO seeking testing review services.
- **Independent Oversight Committee:** A committee established by the PCO that supervises the certification program while exercising independent, professional judgment. This committee shall act as a governing body for the certification program and be responsible for establishing policies and requirements. It shall be composed of at least three professionals who are recognized for their expertise related to the certification program(s) they are responsible for overseeing. No more than one-third of the positions may be held by employees of the PCO.
- **Professional Certification Program:** A program that tests and maintains the competency of practitioners in a particular field of service (e.g., irrigation, plumbing, water management). A certification program differs from a certificate program in that a certification program must require maintenance of competency through continued education. This program labeling system applies only to certification programs.
- **Program Labeling System:** This document specifies the organizational requirements EPA has determined a PCO shall meet to have a professional certification program labeled under one of the WaterSense program specifications.
- **Professional Test Administrator:** A professional trained to maintain a secure, fair, and consistent testing environment.
- **Professional Testing Organization:** An organization that supports or provides for the development or administration of standardized tests, typically on a fee-for-service basis.

5.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFYING ORGANIZATIONS

EPA offers two eligibility paths for PCOs to have their programs earn the WaterSense label. The following subsections describe requirements for each eligibility path a PCO may choose. For clarification purposes, PCOs may fall into one of the following categories and are referenced throughout the document as follows:

- **EPA Approved PCOs:** PCOs that apply directly to EPA for organizational approval and to have a professional certification program labeled. For organizational approval, a PCO can choose one of two paths: third-party accreditation or WaterSense accreditation (see Section 5.2).
- **Adopting PCOs:** PCOs that have adopted an existing WaterSense labeled program as described in Section 5.3. The PCO that provides the labeled program for adoption is called the Parent PCO.

The application requirements to document that a PCO's eligibility requirements have been met are outlined in Section 6.0.

5.1 General Eligibility Requirements for All PCOs

All PCOs that seek to have a professional certification program labeled in accordance with this program labeling system shall:

- Meet the eligibility requirements for EPA Approved PCOs (see Section 5.2) or Adopting PCOs (see Section 5.3).
- Be responsible for the impartiality of their professional certification program activities and not allow commercial, financial, or other interests to compromise their impartiality.

5.2 Eligibility Requirements for EPA Approved PCOs

PCOs may choose one of two paths to meet the eligibility requirements of this program labeling system. PCOs shall either follow the third-party accreditation path or the WaterSense accreditation path. The third-party accreditation path is a more streamlined approach and involves organizational or program accreditation to a national standard as described in Section 5.2.1. The WaterSense accreditation path involves documenting eligibility requirements to EPA as described in Section 5.2.2.

5.2.1 Third-Party Accreditation Path

PCOs may choose to meet the requirements of this program labeling system by meeting the general eligibility requirements in Section 5.1 and obtaining accreditation in accordance with one of the following standards (generally, or for any specific related or unrelated certification program¹):

- ISO/IEC 17024, Conformity Assessment—General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons.
- ST10, National Commission for Certifying Agencies' Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs.

Accredited PCOs shall submit a certificate of accreditation when they apply for approval as outlined in Section 6.1.

5.2.2 WaterSense Accreditation Path

As an alternative to third-party accreditation, PCOs may submit documentation of the eligibility requirements described in this section directly to EPA. PCOs that choose this path shall also meet the requirements in Section 5.1. PCOs shall submit documentation demonstrating they meet these eligibility requirements as outlined in Section 6.1.

5.2.2.1 Institutional Stability

- The PCO shall have sufficient personnel resources with the necessary education, training, technical knowledge, and experience to perform certification activities relevant to the type, range, and volume of work performed.
- The PCO shall have a management structure with overall responsibility for the following elements:
 - Evaluation and certification decisions.

¹ The purpose of third-party accreditation is to demonstrate that the PCO is organizationally competent and capable of offering program certifications, and that its capability has been assessed by an independent third party. As such, the accreditation is not required to be related to the program the PCO intends to have labeled. EPA will evaluate the specific certification program requirements according to the relevant WaterSense program specification.

- Formulation and management of policies and procedures relating to the certification of persons.
- Management of the certification organization, including finance, personnel and records.
- Delegation of authority to any committees or individuals to undertake defined activities on its behalf.
- The PCO shall be a legal entity or part of a legal entity as defined by the state in which it is organized.

5.2.2.2 Subcontracting

- The PCO may contract with another organization regarding work related to the certification program(s); however, the PCO shall take responsibility for the contracted work and shall maintain ultimate responsibility for all certification-related decisions. The PCO shall have a legally binding contract in place that ensures contractor competency, secures confidentiality, and prevents a conflict of interest.

5.2.2.3 Independent Oversight of Certification Program Development and Management

- The PCO shall establish an independent oversight committee(s) to supervise the certification process(es). The oversight committee(s) shall be composed of at least three professionals who are recognized for their expertise related to the certification program(s) they are responsible for overseeing. Employees of the PCO shall hold no more than one-third of the oversight committee positions. The committee(s) shall exercise independent judgment and oversight to ensure the integrity of the certification process.

5.2.2.4 Management of Certified Professionals' Eligibility Requirements

- The oversight committee(s) shall have procedures in place that ensure the eligibility requirements (e.g., experiential requirements) outlined in the relevant WaterSense program specification have been met, as applicable. The procedures shall require that the eligibility requirements are publicly available.
- The PCO shall have procedures in place to establish and maintain current documentation on the eligibility requirements of each certified individual.

5.2.2.5 Development and Maintenance of Certification Exams

- The PCO shall have procedures in place to ensure that the technical content of exam questions and passing scores are established or approved by the oversight committee(s) to ensure that the exam meets the requirements specified in the relevant certification program specification.
- The PCO shall have procedures in place to ensure that an independent academic institution or professional testing organization reviews the exam questions to ensure that they accurately test the subject material. This review shall occur prior to the initial

issuance of the exam and at least once every two years or every 1,000 exams, whichever occurs first.²

5.2.2.6 Security of Assessment Instruments

- The PCO shall have procedures in place to ensure that all examinations and related items are maintained in a secure environment to protect their confidentiality throughout their useful life.
- The PCO shall have procedures in place to ensure that exams are proctored by an independent academic institution, a professional testing organization, professional test administrator, or a professional certified in the subject matter.³
- The PCO shall have procedures in place to ensure that exams are graded by an independent academic institution, professional testing organization, professional test administrator, or a certified professional not involved in the training or proctoring of the practitioner being examined.⁴
- The PCO shall have procedures in place to ensure that all personnel involved in handling and grading examinations and related items are trained in the security procedures established by the PCO.

5.2.2.7 Procedures to Revoke Certification From Certified Professionals

- The PCO shall have procedures in place for implementing disciplinary actions, which include handling complaints and defining the terms and conditions for suspending or withdrawing the certification.

5.3 Eligibility Requirements for Adopting PCOs

A PCO may adopt a WaterSense labeled program offered by a Parent PCO, provided it meets the general eligibility requirements for all PCOs listed in Section 5.1 and is approved by the Parent PCO to meet the following minimum requirements described in Section 5.2.2:

- Institutional stability (Section 5.2.2.1)
- Subcontracting (Section 5.2.2.2)
- Management of certified professionals' eligibility requirements (Section 5.2.2.4)
- Security of assessment instruments (Section 5.2.2.6)
- Procedures to revoke certification from certified professionals (Section 5.2.2.7)

Upon approval by the Parent PCO, the Adopting PCO shall apply to EPA and submit the relevant documentation as described in Section 6.2.

² If the PCO is an academic institution, then a different department within the institution may review the exam as long as the departments are autonomous and considered independent.

³ If the PCO is an academic institution, then a different department within the institution may proctor the exam as long as the departments are autonomous and considered independent.

⁴ If the PCO is an academic institution, then a different department within the institution may grade the exam as long as the departments are autonomous and considered independent.

6.0 APPLICATION

The application process for seeking organizational approval and the WaterSense label for a specific professional certification program varies by PCO type, as outlined in the following subsections. Figure 1 provides a summary of this process.

6.1 Application Requirements for EPA Approved PCOs

EPA Approved PCOs seeking the WaterSense label for a professional certification program shall apply for EPA approval in accordance with this program labeling system. The PCO shall also apply to EPA to have its certification program(s) labeled. The application shall include the following documentation components:

- **Application for PCO Approval:** This application documents that the requirements listed in Section 5.0 of this program labeling system have been met. This application serves as the mechanism for PCOs to demonstrate the general eligibility requirements have been met. Once initially approved by EPA, a PCO does not need to submit the *Application for Professional Certifying Organization Approval* upon subsequent applications for labeling additional certification programs unless the additional certification programs are administered differently from the previously approved certification program. If such differences exist, the PCO must document those differences when they submit their *Application to Label a Professional Certification Program*.
- **Application to Label a Professional Certification Program:** This application documents that the relevant WaterSense program specification criteria have been met. It serves as the mechanism for a PCO to request the WaterSense label for a specific certification program under a WaterSense program specification. As part of the application, two letters of reference are required. The letters shall address how the certification program has benefited water efficiency efforts on a regional, state, or on a national level. One letter shall come from a utility and the other from a state agency or regional water district. Both letters shall be signed and dated by the individual responsible for the reference.
- **Partnership Agreement:** This agreement is signed by both the PCO and EPA. The partnership agreement is signed by EPA upon labeling of the first certification program and is not required for subsequently labeled programs.

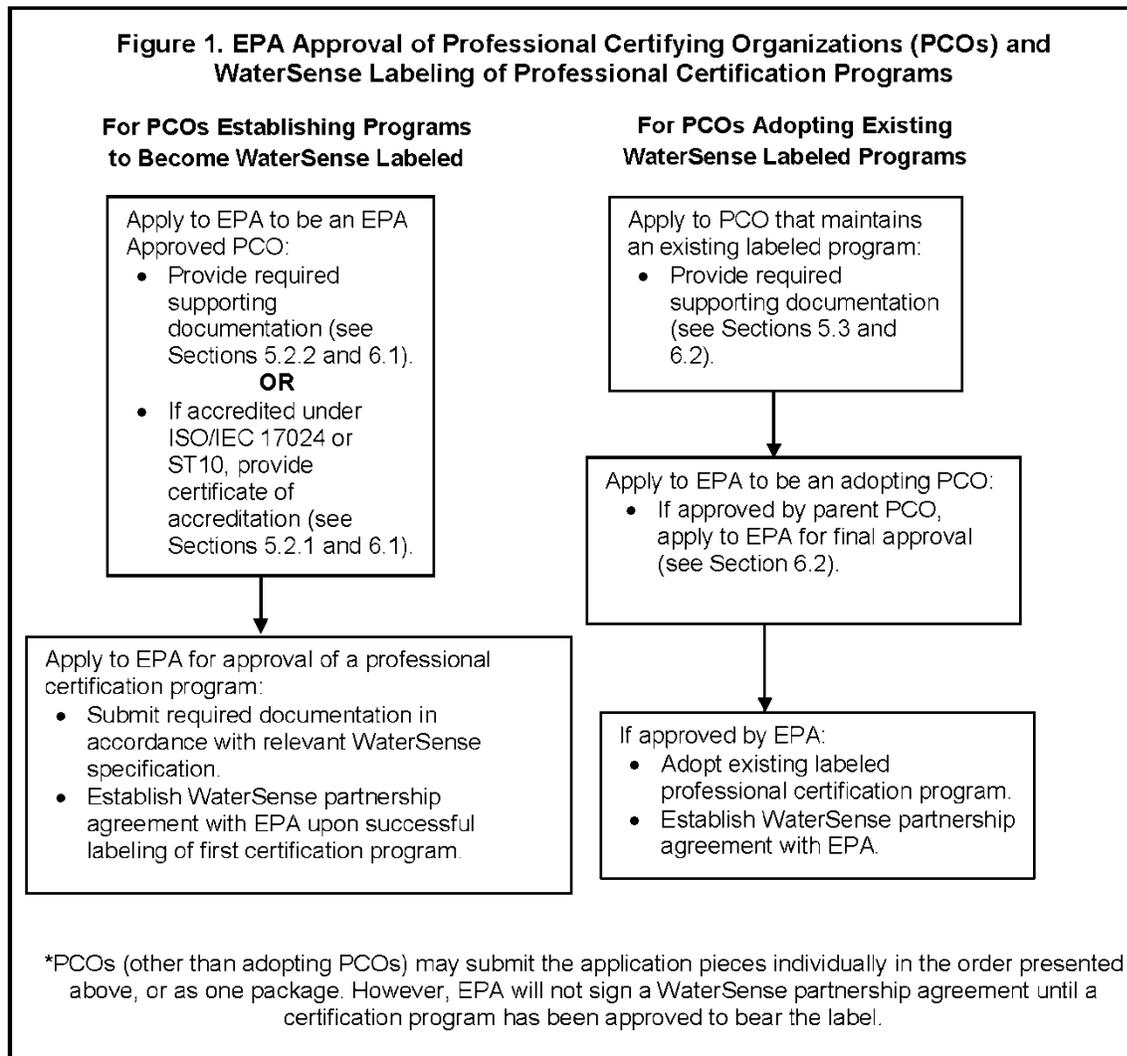
The application documents can be submitted individually in the order listed above, or as one package. The partnership agreement will not be signed by EPA until a certification program has been approved to earn the label. If a PCO is applying to have subsequent certification programs labeled, only the *Application to Label a Professional Certification Program* shall be submitted for the subsequent programs.

6.2 Application Requirements for Adopting PCOs

Upon notification to EPA, an EPA Approved PCO may act as a Parent PCO and offer their labeled program for adoption. The Parent PCO shall offer an application to Adopting PCOs that documents the requirements listed in Section 5.3 of this program labeling system. An Adopting PCO shall submit this application to the relevant Parent PCO. The Parent PCO will review the application and notify the Adopting PCO when the requirements are met. WaterSense has available a sample *Application for Adopting PCOs*. A Parent PCO may use the sample

application or develop its own application. EPA reserves the right to review any applications used by Parent PCOs to allow adoption of their WaterSense labeled program.

After the Parent PCO notifies the Adopting PCO that requirements are met, the Adopting PCO will then submit the *Application for Professional Certifying Organization Approval* to EPA for final approval. Once the application is approved by EPA, EPA will contact the Adopting PCO, and a partnership agreement will be signed by both EPA and the Adopting PCO.



7.0 AUTHORIZATION TO USE THE LABEL

EPA will evaluate the program application forms and documentation to determine if the PCO meets the relevant requirements. EPA will notify the PCO of its determination. If all requirements are met, EPA will provide the PCO with the WaterSense label (e.g., graphic files in various formats), as well as a letter of approval authorizing the PCO to use the label in association with that specific labeled program.

8.0 PCO ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the criteria and procedures established as part of the eligibility requirements, EPA has established specific roles and responsibilities that each type of PCO shall meet, as outlined below.

8.1 All PCOs

All PCOs shall uphold the following roles and responsibilities.

8.1.1 Report Changes in Organization and WaterSense Labeled Program Structure to WaterSense

All PCOs shall inform EPA 30 days prior to implementing any material changes to the requirements listed in Sections 5.2 or 5.3 or to its WaterSense labeled certification program(s). Such changes may include, but are not limited to:

- Changes to the name of a professional certification program or the professional certifying organization.
- Replacement of the primary contacts identified in the organization's partnership agreement.
- Modifications to certified professionals' renewal requirements or documentation processes.
- Substantive changes to testing procedures.
- Substantive changes to examination questions, professional eligibility, maintenance of proficiency criteria, or any other changes that directly impact the program's ability to continue to meet the relevant specification's requirements.

PCOs shall notify EPA of these changes in writing by contacting the WaterSense Helpline at watersense@epa.gov. As appropriate, a Parent PCO may communicate these changes to WaterSense on behalf of its Adopting PCO.

Depending upon the nature of the change, EPA may request written documentation to support the change. EPA reserves the right to review all changes to ensure that they do not conflict with this program labeling system, the WaterSense partnership agreement, or the relevant WaterSense program specification.

8.1.2 Report Annual Program Activity and Statistics

PCOs shall report to WaterSense on an annual basis regarding the professionals certified by their labeled program(s). Reporting information may include but is not limited to:

- The total number of individuals who are currently certified by the PCO under the WaterSense labeled program.
- The number of individuals who have earned the certification in that reporting year.
- Feedback on the WaterSense program and suggestions for improvement.

8.1.3 *Communicate With Certified Professionals About WaterSense*

PCOs shall communicate WaterSense messages to professionals certified by their program, which may include the following:

- Advertise the availability of webinars that WaterSense hosts periodically to provide information to certified professionals.
- Provide messaging/materials to certified professionals upon initial certification and subsequent certification renewals. Electronic versions of these materials will be developed by WaterSense and provided to the PCO for distribution.
- Advertise campaigns and new materials WaterSense will periodically make available to certified professionals. Electronic versions of these materials will be developed by WaterSense and provided to the PCO for distribution.

8.1.4 *Maintain Information About Certified Professionals and Report to WaterSense*

PCOs shall maintain basic contact and business information about certified professionals in a publicly accessible online format, such as a list, searchable directory, etc. In lieu of hosting this information in a publicly accessible online format, Adopting PCO(s) may link to their Parent PCO's list, searchable directory, etc. where information about the Adopting PCOs certified professionals is publicly accessible.

In addition, PCOs shall report to WaterSense on a quarterly basis information about their certified professionals. Parent PCOs must report this information to WaterSense on behalf of their Adopting PCO(s). WaterSense shall provide all PCOs with a standardized format for reporting, at a minimum, the following information for each certified individual:

- Name
- Employer (or company name if self-employed)
- Title of the WaterSense certification(s) earned
- Phone number
- Email address (if available)
- Website URL (if available)
- Customer type (e.g., commercial, residential, residential development)
- Business address including the state (or province) and postal code where the business is located
- Whether the individual is currently available for hire either directly or through his/her company⁵

⁵ EPA recognizes that under certain circumstances, a certified individual might not be directly available for hire to the general public (e.g., the individual could work for a utility that offers professional services as part of a conservation program). This indication will allow consumers looking for a certified professional's services to narrow the list of professionals to those that are available for hire.

8.1.5 Follow the WaterSense Program Mark Guidelines

When using the WaterSense label to identify programs that have been approved by EPA, PCOs shall adhere to the terms of the *WaterSense Program Mark Guidelines*. The label may not be used to imply direct endorsement of a certification program or organization by EPA.

Professionals certified by a WaterSense labeled program shall use the WaterSense promotional label, as described in the *WaterSense Program Mark Guidelines*, to associate themselves with WaterSense. Certified professionals are not permitted to use the WaterSense label or WaterSense partner logo. Certified professionals shall promote themselves as being certified by a WaterSense labeled program. WaterSense will promote professionals certified by labeled programs to the public and to WaterSense partners. Under no circumstances can individuals certified by a WaterSense labeled program promote themselves or their work product as being certified and/or endorsed by EPA or the WaterSense program.

8.2 Responsibilities Regarding Adopted Programs

The following roles and responsibilities apply to PCOs that allow other organizations to adopt their WaterSense labeled program (i.e., Parent PCOs) and PCOs that adopt an existing WaterSense labeled program (i.e., Adopting PCOs).

8.2.1 Parent PCOs

Parent PCOs shall uphold all of the roles and responsibilities outlined in Section 8.1 and, in addition, the following roles and responsibilities:

- Review the *Application for Adopting PCOs*, or the Parent PCO's alternative form of documentation, if interested in offering the labeled program to the prospective Adopting PCO.
- Notify the Adopting PCO when the *Application for Adopting PCOs*, or the Parent PCO's alternative form of documentation has been approved.
- Notify the Adopting PCO of any programmatic changes that the Adopting PCO will need to implement.
- Notify WaterSense if an Adopting PCO no longer meets the requirements of the program labeling system and/or if the relationship between the Parent PCO and Adopting PCO has been dissolved.

8.2.2 Adopting PCOs

Adopting PCOs shall uphold all of the roles and responsibilities regarding the WaterSense labeled program they are adopting, as outlined in Section 8.1. In addition, Adopting PCOs shall also uphold the following roles and responsibilities:

- Submit an *Application for Adopting PCOs*, or the Parent PCO's alternative form of documentation, to the Parent PCO and receive approval.
- Once approved by the Parent PCO, submit an *Application for PCO Approval* to EPA.

- Offer the labeled certification program as was originally approved by EPA for the Parent PCO without modification to relevant aspects, such as the exam content and processes for administering and grading exams.
- Implement any changes to the certification program as directed by the Parent PCO.

9.0 EPA ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

EPA shall uphold the following roles and responsibilities:

- Review PCO application documents to determine if the PCO meets the eligibility requirements as outlined in this program labeling system.
- Review PCO application documents to determine if the certification program meets the requirements outlined in the relevant WaterSense program specification.
- Review and sign PCO WaterSense partnership agreements.
- Provide the WaterSense label to qualified programs.
- Provide PCO partners with information for certified professionals.
- Monitor use of the WaterSense label and determine whether the label shall be suspended or withdrawn.
- Increase awareness of the WaterSense brand by distributing key messages on the benefits of labeled products and programs, as well as the importance of water efficiency.
- Provide PCO partners with public recognition for their involvement in the program and role in promoting water efficiency through the WaterSense Partner of the Year Awards program.
- Review and approve organizational or program changes as necessary.
- Review organizational and certification procedures at its discretion.
- Host and maintain a consolidated list of all certified professionals on the WaterSense website.
- Promote the value of certification programs and link to PCO partner websites.

10.0 MISUSE, SUSPENSION, OR WITHDRAWAL OF THE WATERSENSE LABEL FROM A PCO

PCO partners shall allow EPA or its agent to conduct routine assessments of all policies and procedures relating to the certification of individuals under any labeled programs.

EPA reserves the right to suspend or withdraw the WaterSense label when a PCO or program is found not to conform to this program labeling system, the WaterSense partnership agreement, or the relevant WaterSense program specification, or when a PCO engages in unauthorized, incorrect, or misleading use of the WaterSense label. Circumstances for unauthorized, incorrect, or misleading use of the WaterSense label, and procedures for suspensions or withdrawal, are described in the *WaterSense Program Guidelines* and the *WaterSense Program Mark Guidelines*.

If the WaterSense label is revoked from a Parent PCO, any adopting PCO(s) shall cease use of the WaterSense label in accordance with the *WaterSense Program Guidelines*.

11.0 AMENDMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, AND REVISIONS

EPA reserves the right to amend these rules of procedure, which may include amending or revising this program labeling system, revising any of the WaterSense program specifications, or issuing technical clarifications as provided in the compendium of WaterSense product and program specifications available on the WaterSense website.

Revisions to any of the WaterSense program specifications or this program labeling system can occur due to technological and/or market changes that affect the usefulness of current specifications and program labeling requirements to PCOs, consumers, industry, or the environment or to clarify vague requirements.

Major revisions will generally include changes to the exam requirements, eligibility requirements, and maintenance of proficiency requirements. Major revisions will only be made following an open public process, including discussion with industry and other interested stakeholders. Major revisions will typically require re-approval of existing programs to the new specifications or this program labeling system, as appropriate. The transition period will be identified in the relevant program specification or program labeling system, but will normally be one year.

Minor revisions to program specifications or this program labeling system will generally be more editorial in nature and serve to clarify vague or unclear requirements. Minor revisions will typically not require re-approval of currently labeled programs. EPA will notify stakeholders when program specification or program labeling system revisions are considered major or minor.

To facilitate version control, EPA will designate a title, version number, and date for all of the relevant documents it produces, as indicated below:

- WaterSense Specification for [Program Category] or Professional Certification Program Labeling System
- Version X.Y
- Month, Day, Year

12.0 MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the compendium of WaterSense product and program specifications on the [WaterSense website](#) for a complete listing of current WaterSense program specifications and technical clarifications.

For inquiries or other questions related to this program labeling system or any of the WaterSense program specifications, please contact the WaterSense Helpline at (866) WTR-SENS (987-7367) or watersense@epa.gov.