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Partnership models for achieving GWO certification



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Introduction

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Companies are seeing the growing demand for wind turbine technicians, and Global Wind Organisation's (GWO) training catalog is the clear choice for developing the workforce. GWO has forecast that over 75,000¹ people will require the basic entry-level standard training to work on North America's onshore and offshore wind turbines over the next five years.

GWO training modules are safety and technical standards created by the industry, for the industry. Just as important, the GWO certification process for training providers delivers a high degree of certainty that learning objectives are achieved, giving employers confidence in the qualifications and capabilities of their technicians, who then are more valuable to their employers. It's a win-win.

As prospective training providers evaluate GWO standards, they may have questions about the most efficient and effective ways to achieve

certification. The certification process is defined through the four elements: Physical Resources, Management Systems, Staff Resources, and Training and Assessment as the backbone for consistent delivery of standardized training.

Companies beginning the process may find seeking experienced partners is the quickest way to identify and close gaps. They may also choose to enter direct partnerships with established training providers that can import existing programs into their locations.

Partnerships can take many forms and can be tailored to meet the needs and risk tolerance of each company. The most common partnerships utilized in the industry are separated into models for companies pursuing independent certification and for those choosing to go the route of an ongoing direct partnership with an existing training provider.

¹ Source: Global Wind Workforce Forecast 2021-2025 (GWO/GWEC)
<https://www.globalwindsafety.org/statistics/global-wind-workforce-forecast-2021-2025>

Independent Certification Models

Prospective training providers that decide to pursue certification on their own have several options for support during this process. Experienced partners, familiar with the training modules, and established processes aid in preparation for certification through specific consulting, instructor development, and/or the licensing of training materials. Certification bodies may also have pre-audit services that can help companies prior to initial certification.

Specific Consultancy

Companies pursuing independent certification may obtain guidance from others that have completed their own certification and can seek partners to guide them through the process. The consultancy services offered can be tailored to the individual needs for the certification process.

A consulting partnership can be beneficial as it has the potential to minimize ongoing costs following certification while allowing the company to manage and lead its own certification process. Any additional costs are essentially up-front. This may be the best approach for companies with an existing training program containing similar content that can be aligned with GWO standards.

This partnership model will require the primary company to develop their own resources, including management systems, instructor development processes, training facilities, and curriculum. Additionally, the company must have the capacity to manage customer relationships, including invoicing third party customers, developing sales and marketing materials, etc. The consultant can support development of these resources.

Instructor Development

Companies pursuing independent certification may seek partners to support them in developing their own instructors to lead GWO courses. The [GWO Requirements for Training Providers](#) is a document describing amongst other things, the instructor development process and specifically requires the candidate to be observed by an experienced GWO instructor, a GWO-approved auditor, or an internal auditor who has successfully completed Auditor Qualification Training (see section 9.1.5).

This is often achieved by seeking an existing GWO certified training provider to support the development of the company's instructors. This may be complicated at another training provider within the local area. To avoid the risk of direct competition, companies have had success in partnering with GWO training providers for this purpose in other regions where there is no risk of competition.

The company pursuing independent certification is the one responsible to define their instructor development process in their quality management system, even if they are using an external provider to support the process.

Training Material Licensing or Sale

Companies pursuing independent certification may not have the resources to develop the course curriculum that meets GWO standards and can work with partners willing to directly license or sell their own training materials.

Licensing of training material has less risk for the receiving company as the partner company will be responsible for continuously updating the training material via their own management systems. Licensing has more

risk for the owner of the training materials since they do not have direct control of how the training material is delivered, only the content of the training materials. The content owner will likely elect to periodically observe delivery of their training modules as part of their quality control program or may require instructor development to accompany the licensing of the training materials.

Direct sale may be beneficial for the receiving company as they will receive a finished product and can adapt it to fit their own needs. The receiving company will typically be responsible for updating and maintaining the training materials once the sale is completed.

In both cases, the company pursuing independent certification is accountable for the training content and will be responsible for presenting this material and confirming compliance with GWO learning objectives during their certification audit.

Direct Partnership Models

If you have analyzed the process to become independently certified training provider, but would prefer an alternative, direct partnership with an existing, established training provider may be an option. *This method may help you ramp up quickly to provide GWO training. It may also be an ideal model when there is uncertainty around the volume of students each year, as the costs will be relatively proportional to the number of students.*

Some locations may not have the resources to develop and maintain the required systems and processes needed to administer a GWO training

program, so partnering with an existing provider can overcome this challenge.

Additionally, direct partnerships place much of the burden of the management and maintenance of the GWO training program on the partner training provider while the company simply provides the facilities, and possibly instructor staff, to deliver the training.

These models can be beneficial for the host company as partnering with established training providers may add a level of credibility to their wind technician training program. They are also beneficial for the existing training provider as it will expand their geographic footprint without requiring the investment in new facilities.

The costs and revenue sharing for these models can take many forms. It is up to the partners to agree to terms that are mutually beneficial.

Permanent Host Location or Periodic Facility Rental

Companies with suitable facilities can partner with existing training providers to make their facility and training structures available to deliver GWO training to their own students/employees or even the public at large. The partner training provider with an existing certified GWO program will be responsible for all aspects of training delivery.

If the existing training provider chooses to make the host facility a permanent location, they will have to add the new facility under their existing certification and obtain an addition audit through the multi-site certification process.

The existing training provider may opt to consider the host facility as a training location that is used to periodically deliver training as part of their on-site training process or setup a mobile training structure at the host location, both of which require an additional audit. The existing training provider must have a fixed facility that has been audited prior to completing the on-site training audit. It should be noted that continuous use of a facility that could be certified as a GWO fixed facility must be converted to a fixed facility during the next recertification audit.

Franchise

Companies with their own instructor staff can be more involved in training delivery by becoming a "franchise" location under the existing training provider. *This has been the most common partnership model used in the North American region to date.*

In this model, the company hosting training becomes an extension of the existing training provider, or franchisor. This includes following their management systems (as it specifically relates to delivery of the GWO training modules), their instructor development processes, use of their training curriculum and reporting systems, and submitting to periodic auditing by the training provider holding the GWO certification.

The franchisor company bears full responsibility for the administration and delivery of training per their GWO certification. This results in greater risk for the franchisor, as they are depending on the partner to follow their processes without direct oversight and to not deviate from their established curriculum, course timelines, instructor to student ratios, etc. *It is highly recommended that there is a very clear partnership agreement in place with this model.*

This model is beneficial for companies that have existing training programs with competent instructors but have limited experience with wind technician training. It is also a means for a company to gain experience with delivering GWO training and becoming familiar with administration processes prior to branching out as an independent training provider.

Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive list of partnership options available. Companies should be creative and explore options and terms that best fit their situation and needs. Prospective training providers looking for support can contact existing training providers listed on the GWO website or contact their regional representative to discuss their needs. For very specific questions, send them to info@globalwindsafety.org for a response within 24 hours.

The wind industry is inherently competitive, and competition breeds creativity, but collaboration makes everyone better. The rapid growth in the North American wind industry and the need for standardized training means that all training providers have an opportunity to impact the safety of each worker, because safety is for everyone.

Note: GWO does not recommend or endorse any model or training provider that supports partnerships but encourages companies looking to deliver GWO training at their location to explore all available options to find what best fits their specific situation.