Personnel Certification Governance Committee (PCGC)
Response to PJM (White Paper) Re-evaluation of NERC Continuing Education Program April 12, 2017

The NERC Personnel Certification Governance Committee (PCGC) appreciates PJM's efforts as outlined in the White Paper entitled "Re-evaluation of NERC Continuing Education Program". The PCGC agrees that the new PER Standards have benefited the industry in setting expectations for baseline and continued training of system operations personnel. However, the System Operator Certification (SOC) Program is based on an independent program performing knowledge verification to earn the credential; and upon obtaining the credential, improving their knowledge through their career by continuing their training.

The NERC System Operator Exam Content Outlines, which list the specific task knowledge topics tested by the exam questions, is developed using a Job Task Analysis (JTA). The JTA uses the target operator population to verify the task list. The exam questions are developed by a group of System Operators. Appendix A in the SOC Program manual lists "Recognized Operator Training Topics" that are used as topics for Continuing Education Hours (CEHs) courses. The topics listed in Appendix A are from the Content Outline. Thus, the SOC Program exam and credential maintenance process follow proper certification practices; and, supports the basic tenets of Systematic Approach to Training (SAT).

The foundation of any certification program is a level of independence verifying the knowledge, skills, and/or capabilities of a group of people who must perform specific job tasks. The SOC program is an independent knowledge verification to obtain the credential with a structured credential maintenance program for operators to continue to enhance their knowledge and skills. The SOC program was never intended to be a training program.

A more rigorous training program, as directed by PER-005, does not negate the need for an independent verification and enhanced learning platform.

The PCGC is developing a strategic plan which will include a complete review of the current certification program and credential maintenance. The PCGC will continue to discuss and consider the thoughts as documented in the White Paper, as well as input from industry stakeholders. Any potential changes to the certification program will be shared with the industry via white paper.

Any potential impact to the Continuing Education (CE) program will be discussed and coordinated with the NERC Personnel Subcommittee (PS) and NERC.

NERC is currently in the process of updating its System Operator Certification and Continuing Education Database (SOCCED).

Regards,

Brett Hallborg, Chair
Personnel Certification Governance Committee