

Wisconsin Rural Water Association
Position Description

Position Title: Executive Director

Position Classification: Office Staff

Position Description Approval Date: 6/30/26

The Association

The Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA) was formed in 1981 as a private 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose members are utilities representing over 95% of the public drinking water and wastewater customers in the State of Wisconsin. As the largest utility organization in the state, WRWA's goal is to foster professionalism as well as provide non-regulatory training, technical assistance programs and advocacy efforts. Based in Plover, the organization represents the interests of over 670 public utilities and 200 associate members, which are organizations that support and serve the industry. WRWA has an annual operating budget of \$3+ MM and 16+ staff working in Plover and remotely while serving members. WRWA is governed by 11 Directors representing member utilities and 1 National Board Member.

Members of WRWA benefit from training programs, both virtual and in-person, major conferences that focus on professional networking and industry topics, technical assistance, apprenticeship program, legislative engagement in the state capital of Madison and in Washington D.C., weekly eNews updates and quarterly publications and a low-cost financing program through the Wisconsin Rural Water Finance Corporation affiliate. WRWA is one of the largest Midwestern rural water associations affiliated with the National Rural Water Association, based in Duncan, Oklahoma.

WRWA's Executive Director has served the organization since 2000 and has announced his plan to retire in 2027. He will remain in his position until a successor is appointed, and an appropriate overlap period established. As a result, the Board of Directors has embarked on a state-wide search to recruit a new Executive Director who will guide the organization and its important statewide utility industry leadership activities into the future.

More information can be found on WRWA's website: www.WRWA.org

The Position

Location

The Executive Director State Office and WRWA's main office is at 350 Water Way, Plover, Wisconsin 54467; telephone (715) 344-7778. In addition to a 6,300 ft² office building, WRWA has an on-site Technology Center training workshop on its 5-acre campus.

Reporting Relationships

The Executive Director reports to the President of the 12-member Board of Directors. The Board of Directors typically meets 4 times per year with additional meetings held as required in person, virtually or via conference call.

The Executive Director supervises the WRWA 16-member staff, most of whom are based outside of Plover with the others working throughout Wisconsin. Key staff reporting to the Executive Director includes the Technical Assistance Director, CFO, Executive Administrative Assistant, Member Services Coordinator and Training Specialist.

Other important interactions and working relationships include employees of WRWA members including utilities and associate members; elected officials at the local, state, and Federal level and their staffs; state and Federal EPA representatives; National Rural Water Association and other rural water organizations throughout the country; outside financial advisers and consultants.

Position Charter

The Executive Director serves as the Chief Executive Officer of WRWA, responsible to the Board of Directors for effective conduct of the affairs of the Association. This executive will recommend and participate in the Board's formulation of mission, goals and objectives and related policies. Within that framework, the Executive Director plans, organizes, coordinates, controls, and directs the staff, programs, and activities of the Association.

Major Duties and Responsibilities

Within the limits of the charter and by-laws of the WRWA and policies established by the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, with appropriate delegations will:

- Establish WRWA's organization structure for the headquarters office and the related staffing structure.
- Establish administrative policies and procedures for headquarters function.
- Recruit, hire, and train staff and administer an effective personnel program which includes position descriptions, performance standards, performance appraisals, and a compensation system.

- Develop and supervise an effective program of membership development and membership services; this includes training assistance and conferences, technical assistance, and related programs.
- Develop and maintain a publications program which is responsive to the needs of the membership; this currently includes a variety of electronic and hard copy publications delivered to members and other constituents on a weekly and annual basis along with publications during legislative sessions.
- Develop and conduct an education program to advance the professional / technical / managerial skills of the membership.
- Organize and conduct an annual conference which includes programs, exhibits, and other events consistent with the objectives of the Association.
- Organize and conduct an annual expo which includes programs, exhibits, and other events consistent with the objectives of the Association.
- Conduct research necessary to the Association and inform the Board, elected officials, and membership as appropriate.
- Maintain effective internal and external public relations.
- Serve as spokesman for the Association in conjunction with the Board President.
- Maintain an effective government affairs program to represent the interests of WRWA's members to Congress, State Legislature, and governmental agencies as appropriate; this includes serving as WRWA's Legislative Agent and working in concert on legislative issues with other associations and organizations including the National Rural Water Association.
- Maintain involvement with and sit as a member of the National Water College Board of Directors.
- Maintain involvement with and sit on other board of directors as assigned by the WRWA Board of Directors (for example, WDNR, EPA, or other legislative regulatory financing initiatives.)
- Pursue state and federal grant funds to support the needs of the WRWA membership.
- Fulfill all requirements of each state and federally funded program - obtain funding and qualified and competent staffing, assure completion of required reporting, and maintain successful operation of the programs.
- Manage the finances of WRWA, including the preparation of an annual budget (2026 budget is \$3 MM) and long-range forecasts of needs.
- Ensure the legal integrity of the Association.
- Plan and coordinate meetings of the Board of Directors and related committees.
- Provide periodic reports to the Board of Directors along with recommendations.
- Perform other duties as assigned by the Board.

Travel

The Executive Director will have occasional planned travel: meetings with members throughout Wisconsin, attendance at WRWA meetings and conferences, in Madison during

Wisconsin's legislative session, in Washington D.C. to meet with elected officials and related agencies, and National Rural Water Association meetings.

Compensation

The Executive Director is expected to earn an attractive compensation package and appropriate benefits. The Board of Directors conducts an annual performance and of the Executive Director.

The Candidate

Education

A bachelor's degree is preferred; however, a 15-year combination of education, training, and experience that provide the required knowledge, skills, and abilities may be considered. Demonstrated commitment to continued professional development through the American Society of Association Executives or Certified Association Executive designation desirable.

Professional Qualifications

The ideal candidate must have a proven track record of success and may come from a variety of backgrounds, such as: Serving as the top executive within a comparably sized utility-related association; experience as a "#2" or other senior-level executive at a larger association as noted above; or a management leader or executive from a utility, public water, or wastewater entity. Experience with the water/wastewater utility industry is strongly preferred. At least five years of experience in a leadership role is required. In addition, significant Board interaction is strongly desired.

Preferred Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- **Membership development** (track record of membership retention, increased value and relevance).
- **Board relationships** (significant involvement with governance issues and Board of Director interactions).
- **Planning** (experience in developing and implementing both operational and strategic plans).
- **Water/wastewater industry** (professional experience with and/or knowledge in water/wastewater industry strongly preferred; utility background preferred).
- **Political arena** (experience developing effective working relationships with elected/appointed officials and their staffs).
- **Advocacy** (demonstrated background of successfully influencing legislative activity).

- **Management experience** (strong human resource development; has effectively managed teams of people).
- **Fiscal management** (demonstrated ability to manage financial affairs of an organization, i.e., develop revenue sources and control expenditures to preserve financial stability).
- **Technology** (can utilize the available technological capabilities to enhance the effectiveness of the Association; knowledge of social media).
- **Negotiation skills** (can effectively represent the organization in successful discussions and decisions on key issues).
- **Fund raising** (successful funding activities including development programs and special events).
- **Media/public relations** (articulates objectives and policy positions to the media and the community at large).
- **Vendor relations** (experience engaging with national and regional vendors).
- **Sales orientation** (ability to market and promote the organization to potential members and vendors).
- **Regional knowledge** (familiarity with the State of Wisconsin desirable).

Challenges and Opportunity

The projected first year accomplishments and projects for the new Executive Director of WRWA include:

- Establish presence as the Association's Executive Director, becoming immersed in the details of the day-to-day operations of WRWA and becoming knowledgeable about the work of staff, finances, programs, Board members and members. Strengthen WRWA's role and leadership on behalf of its members as positive and critical partners for Wisconsin's quality of life
- Initiate formal and informal introductions and connections with the WRWA membership through varied communications and in-person gatherings and meetings, thereby developing strong and trusting relationships with key constituencies.
- In concert with the Board and staff, evaluate the strategic direction of WRWA through the review of and development of strategic, operational, and budgetary plans.
- Become a visible and effective advocate for WRWA in Madison and Washington D.C. In partnership with Board and members, establish policy and strategy for State of Wisconsin legislative sessions and ensure advocacy campaigns designed to achieve results.
- Participate in meetings and educational seminars scheduled throughout the year; work with Board and staff representatives to evaluate the effectiveness of and participation in these meetings and programs.

- Based upon the long-tenured employment of several other key WRWA staff members, begin planning for transitions for these leaders through development of an appropriate succession plan.

The Executive Director position of the Wisconsin Rural Water Association is an outstanding opportunity for an executive to lead a professional association with a nearly 40-year history of success and impact on members and the state. An experienced staff and committed Board ensure the historical integrity of the organization and a strong foundation for WRWA going forward. At the same time, the utilities which make up the Association face challenges that include workforce development, technical issues, and funding challenges. WRWA must continue to provide outstanding services and programs as well as advocate on behalf of the membership in the years to come.