

EXECUTIVE SEARCH



Executive Director

SEARCH CONDUCTED BY

STERLING | MARTIN
a s s o c i a t e s

The Opportunity

The Executive Director (ED) of the Water Environment Federation ([WEF](#)) leads a large, global federation comprised of water professionals safeguarding public health and the environment. The ED leads a staff of 90 people, administers an annual budget of \$30M, reports to the Board of Trustees, and works collaboratively with volunteer leadership, including the House of Delegates, Community Leadership Council, and Member Association leaders to execute on the Strategic Plan. WEF's ED will play a pivotal role in WEF's effort to transform the future of water by leading the water community toward a life free of water challenges. This position is locally based in the Washington, DC, area, and the Executive is expected to be present in the WEF office on a regular basis, but it can be a hybrid position.

About WEF

Bold Leadership. Customer at the Center. Collaborative Partnerships. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) in *all* WEF does. These are the core values that guide WEF and its members in fulfilling its vision of a Life Free of Water Challenges. Since 1928, the Water Environment Federation and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water-sector leader, WEF's mission is to inspire the water community in pursuit of human and environmental well-being. Headquartered in Alexandria, VA, WEF is a nonprofit technical and educational organization of 31,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world.

WEFTEC, WEF's Technical Exhibition and Conference, is the largest conference of its kind in North America and offers water professionals the best water education and training available today. At WEFTEC, the full breadth of the water sector comes together in one place to explore, learn, network, grow professionally, and strengthen connections to the water community. WEFTEC serves to support much of WEF's other programming with an annual budget of approximately \$14M.

WEF and its global network of members and Member Associations (MAs) provide water professionals with the latest in water quality education, training, and business opportunities. WEF's diverse membership includes scientists, engineers, regulators, academics, utility managers, plant operators, and other water professionals. WEF uses this collective knowledge to further a shared goal of improving water quality and the worldwide water workforce. WEF partners with other national water-conscious professional organizations and agencies, including but not limited to the United Nations (UN), International Water Association, National Association of Clean Water Agencies, and American Water Works Association to advance innovative practices, technological approaches, and new technology. WEF is committed to supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, specifically goal 6, which ensures availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Through its Students and Young Professionals community, WEF embraces and is working to prepare emerging leaders in the water sector, providing professional development and networking opportunities for this critical cohort of future leaders in the water sector. The INFLOW program aims to enhance diversity and inclusion in the water workforce by introducing future leaders to opportunities in water.

WEF Advocacy

WEF advocacy consists of informing elected officials and policy makers about what water professionals inherently know: producing clean, safe water requires certain resources, legislation, and funding. WEF's advocacy activities aim to educate WEF members and the water sector on public policy issues related to water quality and water resources and equip them to play a greater role in water policy discussions. WEF engages in appropriate and nimble advocacy on legislative and regulatory issues to improve the scientific and technical foundation for water quality laws and regulations, support the need for continued progress in improving water quality, protect public health and the health of aquatic ecosystems, and promote sustainable management of water resources.

WEF Governance

The Board of Trustees serves as the governing body of WEF and holds legal authority and fiduciary responsibilities on behalf of the federation and its membership. The ED reports to the Board of Trustees and manages the day-to-day operations of WEF, in support of the mission and at the direction of the Board. The Board of Trustees also provides guidance and direction to implement the WEF Strategic Plan, which was updated in 2022. The Board consists of the President, President-Elect, Vice President, Past-President, Treasurer, and six Trustees. The WEF Executive Director serves as Secretary of the Board.

A House of Delegates (HOD) is the deliberative and representational body of the Federation made up of members selected by WEF's Member Associations and six Delegates at Large. It advises the Board on matters of strategic direction and public policy development and has authority to elect and remove Trustees only to the extent provided for in the Bylaws.

As a membership organization, WEF understands the value of member engagement and using the collective knowledge of an entire profession to further its mission. More than 2,500 WEF members participate in WEF community activities. WEF technical communities provide the expertise that makes WEF one of the world's leading water quality organizations. Each community focuses on a different aspect of the water sector. The volunteer leaders who serve as chairs and vice chairs of these Communities comprise the Community Leadership Council (CLC), which promotes communication between WEF's communities, staff, Board of Trustees, and Member Associations (MAs) through the HOD.

To learn more about WEF, please visit <https://www.wef.org/> and review the current WEF Strategic Plan at <https://www.wefwaterfuture.org/>.

The Executive Director Role

Desired Outcomes

- Position WEF to achieve the three-year outcome and goals outlined in the Strategic Plan.
- Drive cultural change to better exhibit WEF's values.
- Modernize and enhance WEF's programs, products, and services to better serve and engage a diverse and evolving membership.
- Continue to position WEF as an invaluable resource to the water field and a contemporary

federation that leverages modern systems and fosters next-generation leaders within the staff and volunteer ranks.

- Review WEF's organizational structure and reorganize as required to support these outcomes.
- Strengthen relationships with WEF's water community partners.

Critical Leadership Capabilities and Responsibilities

Strategic Vision and Leadership

- Leverage collaborative engagement with volunteer and partner organization leaders to define and drive: consensus for the future of the water quality industry, WEF's value to the evolving industry, strategic alliances with the broader water sector, and the roles of WEF volunteers and staff in leading the way there.
- Work collaboratively with the Board to advance the new Strategic Plan.
- Partner with volunteer leadership in collaboration with staff to enhance and execute a new Strategic Plan to achieve the course charted for the future of WEF.
- Drive change within staff and volunteer leadership to accomplish goals and metrics of the Strategic Plan.
- Anticipate future challenges and adapt the plan as needed to ensure the success of the Strategic Plan.

Teambuilding and Organizational Capability

- Foster a culture of collaboration, customer focus, and bold leadership that is DEI centric to drive continual growth, innovation, and member service.
- Cultivate talent in line with values and support career progression within WEF; identify potential successors to key roles within WEF based on an understanding of the organization's evolving needs.
- Lead the review and enhancement of systems and processes to support a contemporary professional society that operates with optimal efficiency, keeps the customer at the center, delivers maximum impact, and respectfully leverages volunteer contributions.

Change Management and Leadership

- Drive a change agenda to position WEF as the leading water organization by solidifying the future of WEF in collaboration with the Board, other volunteer leaders, members, and staff and by promoting innovation both internally and externally.
- Serve as a WEF ambassador who identifies and builds strategic alliances with other organizations and a broad range of stakeholders to advocate for the new Strategic Plan and a Life Free of Water Challenges.

Required Skills, Experience, and Desired Qualifications

- Proven, mission-driven leader with 10+ years of experience in an Executive Director, COO, or senior-level position within an organization of comparable complexity.
- Experience successfully implementing Strategic Plans.
- Experience diversifying revenue streams to increase revenues.
- A track-record of producing results in an organization of similar scale, scope, and complexity.
- Knowledge of the water industry is highly desirable.

- Proven track record of successfully leading and inspiring teams through organizational transformation.
- Ability to lead difficult conversations while maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders.
- Bold charismatic leader who can rally internal and external stakeholders and partners around a vision and move forward towards achieving it.
- Ability to act as a spokesperson and be a visible presence at events and take the lead in articulating WEF's positions.
- Strong business and financial acumen; budget management experience.
- Ability to conceive of and establish an effective, cohesive portfolio of customer-centric programs by implementing new programs and sunseting old programs in ways that are sensitive to WEF's traditions.
- Values diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging.
- Authentic leader who builds trusting relationships and has a track record of building, cultivating, and leading a high-performing team.
- Ability to assess staff abilities, org structures, and reorganize, council out, and/or outsource appropriately.
- Experience modernizing an organization's systems, structure, and offerings to optimize effectiveness, efficiency, and value.
- Travel required to events and to fulfill other business needs.
- Candidates from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities are encouraged to apply.

Compensation

A competitive compensation package will be offered to attract an outstanding candidate.

To Apply

To apply, please send a cover letter and current resume (Microsoft Word® format preferred) [here](#). The cover letter should outline how your experience fits the requirements of the position as this will be an important factor in considering your candidacy.

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Additional Information

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