

EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Chief Executive Officer



AMWA

ASSOCIATION OF
METROPOLITAN
WATER AGENCIES

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

THE UNIFIED VOICE OF METROPOLITAN DRINKING WATER SYSTEMS

STERLING | MARTIN
associates

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Washington, DC

Position Description | 2026

Cover image: Witty Adkins Water Treatment Plant, Greenville Water

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THE ORGANIZATION

National leadership for metropolitan drinking water systems

The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) is the national organization of the largest publicly owned drinking water systems in the United States and the nation's only policy-making organization devoted exclusively to metropolitan drinking water suppliers. Founded in 1981 and headquartered in Washington, DC, AMWA represents utility CEOs and general managers whose systems collectively provide safe drinking water to more than 160 million people.

AMWA serves as the unified federal policy voice of large public water systems before Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agencies. Its work also supports sustainable and innovative utility management through peer exchange, executive education, research, publications, conferences, benchmarking resources, and member-to-member knowledge sharing.

AMWA enters this leadership transition from a position of renewed organizational momentum. The Board has emphasized the opportunity for the next CEO to build on strengthened internal operations, improved member engagement, and a capable staff while guiding the association toward its 50th anniversary and its next era of advocacy and member impact.

AMWA AT A GLANCE

160M+ PEOPLE SERVED BY MEMBER UTILITIES	1981 FOUNDED	WASHINGTON, DC HEADQUARTERS	501(c)(6) MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATION
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Financial and Operating Profile

AMWA maintains a sound financial base that gives the next CEO a strong platform for strategic investment and disciplined growth. Based on the organization's 2024 Form 990 and five-year financial trends analysis:

- 2024 total revenue was approximately \$3.39 million, with program service revenue of approximately \$3.19 million.
- 2024 total expenses were approximately \$3.44 million, producing a modest operating deficit for the year while ending net assets remained approximately \$3.17 million.
- Liquidity remained substantial, with approximately 17.5 months of cash and investments and 11.1 months of estimated liquid unrestricted net assets at year-end 2024.
- Membership dues remain the principal revenue engine, complemented by management fees, conferences, investment income, and other sources.



THE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Advocacy, governance, member value, and organizational stewardship

The unified federal policy voice of large public drinking water systems.

The Chief Executive Officer is AMWA's senior executive and principal staff leader, accountable to the Board of Directors through the Board President. The CEO will provide strategic, policy, operational, financial, membership, and organizational leadership while serving as a highly visible spokesperson for the nation's largest publicly owned drinking water systems.

This is a distinctive Washington-based association leadership role. The successful candidate must be equally comfortable shaping federal policy, advising a sophisticated Board of utility executives, leading a high-performing professional staff, strengthening AMWA's member value proposition, and managing the organization with disciplined financial and operational stewardship.

Priorities for the Next CEO

● ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP

Sharpen AMWA's federal legislative and regulatory strategy and ensure member perspectives are heard by Congress, EPA, DHS, and other agencies.

● STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Partner with the Board and senior staff to define the next strategic horizon, establish measurable priorities, and align resources behind the highest-value work.

● MEMBER RELEVANCE AND GROWTH

Deepen engagement with existing utilities, strengthen recruitment and retention, and continually refine AMWA's value proposition for metropolitan water leaders.

● EXTERNAL VOICE AND VISIBILITY

Serve as a credible, compelling spokesperson for AMWA and the public drinking water sector with policymakers, media, peer organizations, and other stakeholders.

● ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Lead staff, systems, technology, programs, events, and business processes with clarity, accountability, transparency, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

● FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Oversee AMWA's strong balance sheet, manage budgets and investments prudently, and pursue responsible opportunities for revenue diversification.

● WATER-SECTOR CONNECTIVITY

Build constructive relationships across the water community while keeping AMWA's distinctive focus on the needs of large publicly owned drinking water systems.

Reporting Relationship and Governance

The CEO reports to the Board of Directors through the President and is directly accountable for implementing Board policy and direction. The CEO prepares issues for Board consideration, provides timely reporting on organizational performance, supports sound governance and decision-making, and collaborates with the Board on annual CEO and organizational performance measures.



WATERISAC AND RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES

A distinct strategic oversight responsibility

WATERISAC OVERSIGHT

Founded by AMWA in 2002 at the urging of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation, WaterISAC is the water and wastewater sector's trusted, all-hazards security resource. It delivers threat alerts, analysis, and mitigation guidance that help utilities prepare for, respond to, and recover from cyber, physical, and natural hazards, and today supports more than 3,800 security professionals across hundreds of utilities and partner organizations nationwide.

AMWA serves as the management company for the Water Information Sharing and Analysis Center (WaterISAC) and is its sole member. The CEO will provide appropriate executive oversight of AMWA's management relationship with WaterISAC and other related initiatives, consistent with Board direction, organizational agreements, and the division of responsibilities in effect at the time of appointment.

This responsibility calls for clear accountability, disciplined oversight, thoughtful coordination, and alignment of organizational responsibilities and resources with Board direction and governing agreements.

*Strategic oversight grounded in accountability,
coordination, and Board direction.*



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The mandate for mission, members, people, performance, and impact

Strategic Leadership and Planning

- Work with the Board of Directors and AMWA senior leaders to establish short-term objectives, long-range goals, measures of success, funding expectations, and related plans and policies.
- Refine and clearly articulate AMWA's strategic vision and member value proposition, ensuring that the organization has a compelling sense of direction and relevance.
- Translate strategy into annual operating plans, organizational goals, performance measures, and resource allocation decisions.
- Communicate AMWA's long-term direction effectively to members, staff, policymakers, partners, and other audiences.
- Maintain an informed view of water-sector trends, federal policy developments, member utility priorities, and emerging risks that may affect AMWA's future.

Federal Policy, Advocacy, and External Affairs

- Lead AMWA's federal legislative and regulatory advocacy and ensure that positions reflect member priorities and the realities facing large public drinking water systems.
- Develop and sustain trusted relationships with members of Congress, congressional staff, EPA, DHS, other federal agencies, and key policy stakeholders.
- Influence public policy through direct engagement, coalition building, testimony, written comments, policy communications, and strategic use of external advocacy resources.
- Serve as a confident public spokesperson and generate constructive visibility for AMWA and its positions.
- Represent AMWA with peer water organizations, allied associations, public officials, media, and other external constituencies.

Board Partnership and Governance

- Serve as a trusted advisor to the Board, President, Executive Committee, and other volunteer leaders.
- Prepare Board members to make informed decisions by presenting concise analysis, recommendations, financial information, and policy context.
- Execute Board policy direction faithfully and maintain clear boundaries between governance and management responsibilities.
- Provide regular reports on operations, advocacy, membership, finance, and strategic performance.
- Support Board development, succession, committee effectiveness, and governance practices that reinforce accountability and member representation.

Membership Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention

- Strengthen the AMWA member value proposition and ensure that programs, communications, conferences, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing resources address member needs.
- Oversee membership marketing, recruitment, renewals, retention, and subscriber relationships.
- Maximize participation in committees, conferences, peer networks, surveys, and other engagement opportunities.
- Maintain strong relationships with utility CEOs, general managers, and senior executives across the membership.

Organizational and Staff Leadership

- Serve as an accessible, supportive, and decisive staff leader who attracts, retains, develops, and motivates a high-performing team.
- Set clear expectations, delegate appropriately, hold staff accountable for results, and ensure that individual and departmental goals align with strategy.
- Promote constructive collaboration, rigorous decision-making, transparent communication, and high standards of quality across the organization.
- Develop management capability and succession depth, address performance issues promptly, and make organizational adjustments when needed.
- Create an inclusive culture that values initiative, professional growth, service to members, and continuous improvement.

Financial Management and Business Stewardship

- Oversee AMWA's financial structure, annual budget, reserves, investments, internal controls, audit relationships, and financial reporting.
- Develop actionable business plans aligned with short- and long-term strategic objectives.
- Grow and protect revenue from membership while identifying prudent non-dues revenue opportunities.
- Continually improve planning, budgeting, forecasting, and performance reporting.
- Allocate resources to maximize AMWA's impact on behalf of members while maintaining long-term financial sustainability.

Operations, Programs, and Risk Management

- Ensure effective day-to-day operations, including policies, procedures, technology, vendor management, contracts, facilities, and administrative systems.
- Establish an annual work plan and ensure disciplined execution across advocacy, membership, communications, conferences, research, and other programs.
- Ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, employment requirements, governance obligations, and business ethics.
- Identify organizational, reputational, financial, cybersecurity, and operational risks and ensure appropriate mitigation and continuity planning.
- Use association management, customer relationship management, learning, data, and communications technologies to improve productivity and member experience.

Communications and Convening

- Oversee the organization's communications, marketing, publications, digital presence, media engagement, and messaging.
- Ensure that AMWA's Water Policy Conference, Executive Management Conference, webinars, and other convenings deliver meaningful value and reinforce AMWA's market position.
- Communicate complex policy and operational issues in clear, compelling terms for executive, technical, legislative, regulatory, and public audiences.



CANDIDATE PROFILE

Strategic perspective, operational discipline, and leadership through influence

The Board seeks an accomplished association executive and public-policy leader who combines strategic perspective with operational discipline. The strongest candidates will bring a record of leading through influence, building credibility with sophisticated stakeholders, and converting strategy into measurable organizational performance.

Critical Competencies for Success

FEDERAL POLICY ACUMEN

Deep understanding of legislative and regulatory processes, coalition dynamics, and the practical work of influencing federal policy. Water-sector experience is highly valued, but candidates with strong transferable experience in utilities, infrastructure, environmental policy, public health, or other heavily regulated sectors may also be compelling. Candidates without water-sector experience are expected to develop a working knowledge of drinking water utility operations, policy issues, and member priorities within the first year.

EXECUTIVE PRESENCE AND COMMUNICATION

Confident and credible before Boards, Congress, federal agencies, media, member executives, and external partners; able to distill complex issues, advocate persuasively, and represent AMWA with judgment and diplomacy.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Ability to establish direction, prioritize among competing opportunities, link mission to measurable outcomes, and guide an organization through change without losing sight of member needs.

BOARD PARTNERSHIP

Experience working effectively with a volunteer Board of senior executives; understands governance, builds trust, handles difficult issues candidly, and supports knowledge-based decision-making.

ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

Strong command of member-based organization operations, including membership, programs, conferences, communications, technology, budgeting, governance, and staff leadership.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Sound business judgment and comfort with budgeting, investments, reserves, audits, revenue strategy, performance reporting, and resource allocation.

PEOPLE LEADERSHIP

An empowering, accountable management style that develops talent, promotes collaboration, clarifies expectations, and builds a healthy high-performance culture.

MEMBER ORIENTATION

Instinctively listens to members, understands executive-level expectations, and converts insight into services, advocacy, knowledge-sharing, and experiences that reinforce value and loyalty.

INTEGRITY AND JUDGMENT

Demonstrates the highest ethical standards, discretion, transparency, and composure; exercises sound and unbiased judgment, adheres to appropriate conflict-of-interest practices, and consistently advances AMWA's mission and member interests.

Leadership Style

AMWA will be best served by a CEO who leads with conviction while genuinely valuing input from the Board and staff, projects confidence without overshadowing others, and serves as a visible advocate for AMWA while remaining attentive to the discipline of internal execution. The individual should exhibit altruism, listen well, build consensus where possible, make decisions when needed, and establish trust through candor, reliability, preparation, and follow-through.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The experience needed to lead a high-profile national association

- A minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible senior association, nonprofit, public-policy, utility, infrastructure, or related leadership experience; significant experience leading an association or comparable member-governed organization is strongly preferred.
- Demonstrated success working with a Board of Directors and senior volunteer leaders in a complex governance environment.
- Demonstrated knowledge of federal legislative and regulatory processes and a record of effective advocacy or public-policy influence.
- Water-sector experience or demonstrated ability to learn the sector and become proficient quickly.
- General knowledge of organizational financial management, including budgeting, reporting, controls, reserves, investments, and audit oversight.
- Demonstrated success with membership recruitment, engagement, retention, marketing, and value-proposition development.
- Demonstrated experience overseeing major conferences, executive convenings, educational programs, or comparable member-facing events that deliver strategic value, engagement, and revenue.
- Strong written, oral, presentation, media, relationship-building, and facilitation skills.
- Experience leading, developing, and evaluating professional staff and creating a collaborative, accountable culture.
- Familiarity with modern association technologies, including association management systems, CRM platforms, learning systems, digital communications, data tools, and productivity technologies.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred. Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential preferred.
- Ability and willingness to travel regularly to member utilities, conferences, policy meetings, and other events; travel may reach approximately 30 percent.

Location

AMWA is headquartered at 1250 I Street, NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC. Because federal advocacy, Board engagement, staff leadership, and external representation are central to the role, the CEO should be prepared to maintain a strong and visible presence in the Washington metropolitan area and travel nationally as required.

Compensation

AMWA will offer a competitive executive compensation and benefits package designed to attract an outstanding candidate. Final compensation will reflect the selected candidate's experience, qualifications, and the Board's compensation framework.

Equal Opportunity

AMWA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Employment decisions are made in accordance with applicable law and without unlawful discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics.



APPLY AND INQUIRE

Contact details and how to apply

Lead AMWA toward its 50th anniversary and its next era of advocacy and member impact.

AMWA is conducting a national search for its next Chief Executive Officer. The process will emphasize demonstrated leadership capability, federal policy and advocacy effectiveness, association management expertise, Board partnership, financial stewardship, and alignment with the needs of the nation's largest publicly owned drinking water systems.

Confidential Inquiries

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Apply Now

[Open the AMWA CEO application portal](#)

All inquiries will be handled with the utmost confidentiality.