SOUTH COAST WATER DISTRICT

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (EX. D)

DEFINITION

This position is located in the immediate Office of the General Manager and manages, plans, organizes, and implements comprehensive public information and community relations plans and programs for the District; plans, manages, implements, coordinates, and evaluates public information, community education and outreach, media relations functions and activities; fosters cooperative working relationships with intergovernmental and regulatory agencies and the media; and performs other duties as assigned.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

This position reports to the General Manager. The position supervises the Website Content Administrator.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This is an executive level, non-merit system, contract position. The title is Public Information Officer. Incumbent performs a variety of public information and community outreach efforts, project coordination, and management support work for the Board of Directors, General Manager, and other District management staff. The work requires extensive public contact, the frequent use of tact, discretion, and independent judgment, knowledge of District activities and the ability to conduct public information and outreach projects. Responsibilities include coordinating the activities of the office with those of other offices, divisions and departments and managing and accomplishing the complex and varied functions of the public information office.

The incumbent ensures that her/his activities are aligned with and support the South Coast Water District’s policies, mission, vision, core values, core strategies, and annual action items as well as performance measures.

EXAMPLES OF ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

Duties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Develops and implements comprehensive communication plan(s) aligned with SCWD Communication pillars. Iteratively updates and modifies per priority communication concentration areas for each fiscal year including target audiences, messaging points, and communication tools for delivery of messaging as well as measures to gauge effectiveness.
- Develops and implements focused public outreach programs/activities to inform the public and garner support for individual District’s projects and major initiatives including, but not limited to, rate increases, large construction and/or infrastructure rehabilitation projects, and water conservation/drought plans/programs.
- Manages and coordinates the work plan for the assigned functions; meets with staff to identify and resolve problems; assigns work activities, projects and programs; monitors work flow; reviews and evaluates work products, methods and procedures.
- Participates in the selection, trains, motivates, and evaluates assigned personnel, conducts quarterly performance and development sessions with each direct report; provides or coordinates staff training; works with employees to correct deficiencies; provides input on discipline and termination procedures.
- Develops and implements specific goals, objectives, and procedures for the public information office.
- Prepares, administers, and is responsible for the budget for assigned function; participates in the forecast of additional funds needed for services, materials, and supplies; administers the approved budget.
 Responsible for the overall quality of the public information office’s service by developing, reviewing, and implementing procedures to meet legal requirements and District needs.
 Prioritizes and allocates available resources; and reviews and evaluates program and service delivery, makes recommendations for improvement, and ensures maximum effective service provision.
 Participates in strategic planning for the District and sets goals for the public information office to support the District’s strategic plan; participates in developing procedures, and protocols to implement District goals and objectives.
 Formulates, develops, implements, and evaluates the District’s program of public information and education on activities and services by leading and managing media relations, community relations and outreach efforts.
 Plans agendas, prepares information papers, and leads or coordinates preparations for Customer Advisory Committee meetings when and as assigned.
 Prepares, responds to, and distributes press releases, as approved by the General Manager, through all available media; arranges information news releases and performs other related duties in the distribution of information.
 Serves as the District initial contact with the media. Arranges preparations for media interviews including preparing talking points suggested to be emphasized by the General Manager, likely or posed questions from the media, and detailed responses to provide to the media. Responds to official Public Information Requests from the media after coordinating response with the General Manager.
 Plans and develops paper and electronic publications and other outreach materials, including newsletters/bill inserts general interest materials, brochures, and briefing booklets on specific issues; edits paper/electronic publications.
 Participates in the development and management of the District’s image, including review of materials developed by other departments for public distribution and marketing programs, projects, and issues of importance to the District.
 Creates outreach communications supporting internal mission functions such as Water Quality Report (annual CCR), Water Conservation (e.g., flyers, direct mail), Environmental, Health and Safety (Crisis Communications responsibilities of the Public Information Officer), and major capital improvement projects.
 Leads, manages, develops plans for, and executes the District’s participation in community and special events as assigned; produces informational materials.
 Leads the District’s education outreach program, including developing classroom presentations and handouts and coordinating with other agencies on joint projects such as the water assembly program. Leads, manages, develops plans, and executes the District’s annual scholarship program.
 Creates, produces, and edits District publications, including annual reports, employee newsletters, consumer reports, and special publications.
 Reviews and provides input on the look and content of the District website.
 Serves as a liaison with other agencies, including partnering on special projects related to public relations and speaking at various community events and industry association meetings.
 Serves as project manager for special projects as assigned; prepares staff reports, memos, and presentations for Board Committee and Board review.
 Receives inquiries and provides information to the public regarding a wide variety of topics and successfully communicates with a variety of news media.
 Attends and participates in professional group meetings; stays abreast of new trends and innovations in the field of public information and community outreach.
 Monitors changes in laws, regulations and technology that may affect divisional operations; implements procedural changes as required.
 Prepares and directs the preparation of a variety of written correspondence, reports, procedures, and other written materials.
 Maintains and directs the maintenance of working and official office files.
 Performs other duties as assigned.
QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Administrative principles and practices, including goal setting, program development, implementation, and evaluation.
- Principles and practices of budget development, administration, and accountability.
- Basic principles of supervision and training.
- Organizational practices as applied to the development, analysis, and evaluation of programs, policies, and operational needs of the assigned division and the District.
- Practices of researching program issues, evaluating alternatives, making sound recommendations, and preparing and presenting effective staff reports.
- Principles, practices, and techniques used in the conduct of an effective public information and publicity program for a water and wastewater district.
- Principles, practices, and procedures related to media relations, reporting, and news writing.
- Recent and on-going developments, current literature, and sources of information related to public relations.
- Applicable Federal and State laws, District regulations, codes, policies, and procedures.
- Record keeping principles and procedures.
- Modern office practices, methods, and computer equipment.
- Computer applications related to the work.
- English usage, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation.
- Techniques for effectively representing the District in contacts with governmental agencies, community groups, and various business, professional, educational, regulatory, and legislative organizations, and various media.
- Techniques for providing a high level of customer service to public and District staff, in person and over the telephone.

Ability to:

- Plan, research, organize, administer, coordinate, implement, review, and evaluate a public information and community affairs program.
- Develop and implement goals, objectives, procedures, work standards, and internal controls for the office.
- Identify and implement effective course of action to complete assigned work.
- Prepare and administer complex budgets; allocate limited resources in a cost effective manner.
- Effectively represent the public information office and the District in meetings with governmental agencies, professional, and regulatory, and legislative organizations.
- Accomplish outreach efforts such as organizing, setting up, manning booths, talking to public, etc. with support of others in the District.
- Research, analyze, and evaluate new public information service delivery methods, procedures, and techniques.
- Make sound, independent decisions in day-to-day activities and in emergency situations.
- Plan, research, organize, coordinate, and implement a variety of public information, media, and legislative related activities and programs.
- Research, develop, write, and deliver accurate and effective communications.
- Develop effective public and community outreach strategies and campaigns; work effectively with diverse groups of different ages and various socio-economic backgrounds; listen to and discuss problems and complaints tactfully.
- Manage, organize and deliver events, workshops and meetings, including meeting facilitation as assigned.
- Conduct complex research projects related to public information, evaluate alternatives, make sound recommendations, and prepare effective technical staff reports.
Analyze, interpret, summarize, and present administrative and technical information and data in an effective manner.

Prepare clear and concise reports, correspondence, policies, procedures, and other written materials.

Make accurate arithmetic, financial, and statistical computations.

Organize and prioritize a variety of projects and multiple tasks in an effective and timely manner; organize own work, set priorities, and meet critical time deadlines.

Operate modern office equipment including computer equipment and specialized software applications programs.

Use English effectively to communicate in person, through public speaking, over the telephone, and in writing.

Use tact, initiative, prudence and independent judgment within general policy, procedural and legal guidelines.

Establish and maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING GUIDELINES

Any combination of experience and training that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the knowledge and abilities would be:

Experience:

Ten (10) years of increasingly responsible experience involving development and execution of an organizational comprehensive communications program, including successful execution of specific communications actions which positively position the District, management issues, media relations, public affairs and/or community outreach programs.

Training:

Equivalent to a four-year degree from an accredited college or university with major coursework in public relations, journalism, communications, or a closely related field.

License or Certificate:

Valid California class C driver’s license with satisfactory driving record.

PREFERENCE: Significant experience as a Public Information Manager within the water/wastewater industry.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Must possess mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment, including a computer; to operate a motor vehicle and to visit various District and meeting sites; vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person, and over the telephone. This is primarily a sedentary office classification although standing in work areas and walking between work areas may be required. Finger dexterity is needed to access, enter and retrieve data using a computer keyboard, typewriter keyboard or calculator and to operate standard office equipment. Positions in this classification occasionally bend, stoop, kneel, reach, push and pull drawers open and closed to retrieve and file information. Employees must possess the ability to lift, carry, push, and pull materials and objects weighing up to 25 pounds, such as setting up events.

ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS

Employees work in an office environment with moderate noise levels, controlled temperature conditions and no direct exposure to hazardous physical substances. Employees may interact with upset staff and/or public
and private representatives in interpreting and enforcing departmental policies and procedures.

**WORKING CONDITIONS**

May be required to work on evenings, weekends and holidays in order to (a) attend Board meetings as assigned, community events, and various other meetings, (b) respond to media, (c) perform crisis communications, (d) perform District outreach at community events

*The specific statements shown in each section of this classification description are not intended to be all-inclusive. They represent the essential functions and minimum qualifications necessary to successfully perform the assigned functions. Management reserves the right to add, modify, change or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodations so that qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job.*