

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Valley Water (Santa Clara Valley Water District)

Santa Clara County, California



**Valley Water**

Clean Water • Healthy Environment • Flood Protection



Guadalupe Reservoir, Santa Clara County

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## **THE GREATER BAY AREA AND SILICON VALLEY**

Located on the southern coast of San Francisco Bay in northern California, Santa Clara County is the home of Silicon Valley, the technology center of the world. With an agrarian heritage, the county today hosts thousands of technology companies including the headquarters of industry giants Adobe, Alphabet (Google), Apple, Cisco, eBay, HP, Meta (Facebook), and Netflix, among others. The Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) is the primary water resources agency for the county and the second-largest water wholesaler in the state.

Considered Silicon Valley's capital, the City of San José (2026 pop. 990,118, [california-demographics.com](http://california-demographics.com)) is the county seat, located roughly 50 miles south of San Francisco and 390 miles north of Los Angeles. The city is California's third largest, the nation's 13<sup>th</sup> largest, and one of the most diverse large cities in the United States. There is no ethnic majority here – residents speak more than 56 languages. Valley Water is proud of the cultural diversity reflected in the surrounding population, workforce, and neighborhoods.

The Bay Area is one of the most desirable locations in the world. Residents enjoy a high quality of life

including an average of 300 days of sunshine a year, with access to world-class culture, performing arts, professional sports teams, and every manner of recreational opportunity. A year-round calendar of festivals and celebrations creates a sense of community. California's beaches, the Pacific Coast Highway, Napa Valley, and Lake Tahoe are all nearby.

Thirty-one public school districts and over 240 private schools offer many educational choices. Innovative programs in local school districts include a nationally acclaimed performing arts magnet, as well as concentrations in aerospace, international studies, math and science, radio and television, and more. Universities in and near the county include San Jose State University, California State University East Bay, Santa Clara University, Stanford University, and three University of California campuses.

## **VALLEY WATER**

Founded in 1929 and headquartered in San José, Valley Water is a public agency that manages an integrated water resources system that includes the supply of clean, safe water, flood protection, and environmental stewardship of streams on behalf of Santa Clara County's nearly two million residents and commuters

every day. The agency manages 10 dams and surface water reservoirs, 142 miles of pipeline, three water treatment plants, an advanced water purification center, a state-of-the-art water quality laboratory, 285 acres of groundwater recharge ponds, and 294 miles of streams. Valley Water provides wholesale water and groundwater management services to local municipalities and private water retailers, who deliver drinking water directly to homes, businesses, commuters, 5,000 private well users, and major stakeholders in the county.

The state legislature created Valley Water as a Special District under the District Act. Valley Water's boundaries, which are the same as the county's, stretch 1,300 square miles, encompassing 15 cities and all unincorporated areas. A seven-member board of directors governs Valley Water. In November of even-numbered years, voters elect directors from seven geographic districts. Directors serve staggered, four-year terms with a limit of four terms. Along with the district counsel and the clerk of the board, the chief executive officer (CEO) is one of three board-appointed officers reporting directly to the board. Collaborative decision-making is part of Valley Water's culture.

Valley Water's mission is to provide Santa Clara County with safe, clean water for a healthy life, environment, and economy. The FY 2025-26 operating budget of \$948,925 million supports approximately 876 employees.

For more information about Valley Water, please visit: <https://www.valleywater.org>.

## **THE CEO POSITION**

The CEO is responsible for execution of the policy directives from the board of directors, Valley Water's day-to-day operations, and management of the leadership team. The leadership team is comprised of

the CEO, the assistant CEO, three chief operating officers (COOs) (water utility enterprise, watersheds, and IT and administrative services), and the chief of external affairs.

Valley Water has been much in the news recently and encourages all prospective candidates to explore all aspects of this opportunity thoroughly, including the organization itself, the cost of living, etc. Since mid-December 2024, the CEO position has been in an interim posture. That said, the current interim CEO, a longtime former employee who returned from retirement to lead the district, has maintained stability in the role, serving since February 2025. Furthermore, CEO tenure at Valley Water is historically admirable. Dating back to late-1994, the average tenure is 7.38 years.

**QUALIFICATIONS**

A bachelor's degree (public or business administration, finance, engineering, or related) and at least seven years of experience demonstrating progressively increased responsibility, including three years in a high-level capacity, are required. Water utility and industry knowledge, technical expertise, and local government leadership and management are desirable.

**THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

The description that follows represents the collective work product of the board of directors, both individually and collectively, all board-appointed officers, and the leadership of Valley Water's three



unions, as well as comments from the public input sessions for employees and citizens, and the organization-wide survey of all employees.

Valley Water's next CEO is an experienced leader and an effective manager with a progressive leadership style and the following skill sets as identified by employees: integrity and trustworthiness; clear vision and strategic thinking; and empathy and emotional intelligence.

In addition, Valley Water seeks the following in its next CEO: innovation and creativity; strong negotiating skills, including collective bargaining and labor relations experience; legislative and lobbying experience and skills; team-building experience and skills; and a strong understanding of public administration and governance with respect to special

districts, and all applicable laws and regulations.

Valley Water seeks a CEO with total commitment to transparency, integrity, professionalism, ethics, and the appropriate use of power. The employment contract incorporates the ICMA's (International City/County Management Association's) Code of Ethics with Guidelines, which the new CEO will follow. The CEO is expected to be passionate about Valley Water, local government, water, and every aspect of the organization's mission, vision, values, and day-to-day operations. The preferred candidate is a change agent, looking at Valley Water's culture with fresh eyes.

The ideal candidate has expert-level inward- and outward-facing communication skills, and the ability

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN**

The recruitment will follow the schedule below as much as possible. Be mindful of the filing deadline. Round One and Round Two Interview dates may be modified as needed.

**SCHEDULE**

Filing Deadline: . . . . . June 14, 2026	Round One Interviews (Virtual): . . . . . July 27, 2026
Preliminary Interviews: . . . . . June 29 – July 3, 2026	Round Two Interviews (In Person): . . . . . August 13, 2026
Recommendation of Candidates: . . . . . July 14, 2026	

to relate to persons from every walk of life. The successful candidate has good judgment, humility, and patience.

The next CEO will build and maintain positive, productive relationships with local, state, and federal agencies, and will ensure Valley Water leverages all advantages associated with Silicon Valley to receive its fair share of state and federal funding. The CEO represents Valley Water to the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA). Although the position reports to the board of directors, a strong, collaborative working relationship with the district counsel, the clerk of the board, and all

business units is essential.

The next CEO is enthusiastic about building and maintaining an effective, high-functioning team throughout the organization. The ideal candidate empowers others and avoids micromanagement. The successful candidate is comfortable in a multi-cultural environment with a demonstrated professional commitment to diversity and inclusion, including those with disabilities. The preferred candidate is a public servant, a collaborative problem solver, and a champion of a transparent and customer service-

oriented government.

The successful candidate has the strength, experience, and skill to support and guide the diverse, engaged members of the board of directors. The next CEO can say no to the board with authority, but politely and with tact. The ideal candidate is diplomatic, politically astute, but apolitical, and operates with the requisite amount of objectivity and professional detachment. The preferred candidate is a good listener, even-tempered and calm under pressure, and with excellent business sense.

## TOTAL COMPENSATION OVERVIEW

### Compensation:

**Salary** – The annual salary for this opportunity is \$429,042 to \$544,752, and appointment will be made depending upon the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate.

### Paid Time Off:

**Vacation** – 224 hours/year, prorated

**Sick** – 96 hours/year, unlimited accumulation

**Executive** – 24 hours/year

**Personal** – 32 hours/year, prorated

**Holiday** – 14 paid holidays

**Additional** – Bereavement, Parental

### Retirement:

**CalPERS** – a defined benefit retirement plan is offered through the California Public Employees Retirement System 2.5% at 55 (Tier 1), 2% at 60 (Tier 2: Valley Water pays the employee contribution) or 2% @ 62 (Tier 3) depending on CalPERS membership status at the time of hire.

**Social Security** – Valley Water employees do not contribute to Social Security.

**Deferred Compensation** – Voluntary 401(a) plan, with up to \$9,000 in matching funds from Valley Water.

**Retirement Health Benefits** – extensive, with minimum 15 years public agency service

### Insurances:

**Medical, Dental, Vision Care, and Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** – provided by Valley Water with no monthly premium cost to the employee

**Group Life** – Valley Water-paid (up to \$100,000)

**Disability Insurances** – short- and long-term, Valley Water-paid

**Flexible Spending** – Health Care (\$3,400), Dependent Care (\$7,500/family)

**Wellness** – multiple programs, including financial

### Automobile Allowance:

\$600 per month, plus out-of-county mileage

### Tuition Assistance:

100% reimbursement up to \$3,500/year.

### At Will and EEO:

An employment contract further describes the terms of this unclassified, at-will position. Valley Water is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## APPLY

To be considered for this excellent professional opportunity, please email only your cover letter and resume to [apply@columbialtd.com](mailto:apply@columbialtd.com), naming your files Last.First.CL and Last.First.Resume. Receipt of your submittal will be acknowledged within two business days. All applicants will be updated on their status following the Recommendation of Candidates.

If you have any questions regarding the recruitment process, or this opportunity, please feel free to call Andrew Gorgey directly at (970) 987-1238. For more information, visit the Columbia Ltd website: <https://columbialtd.com>.