

Key Leadership Characteristics and Qualifications of the MWD General Manager

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An excellent General Manager for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California will have a well-rounded blend of visionary leadership, collaborative finesse, and a knack for innovation—backed by deep qualifications and respect in water utility management and financial stewardship. Here's an outline of *key leadership characteristics and qualifications*.

Key Leadership Characteristics

1. Visionary Outlook

- **Strategic foresight:** Anticipates regional water supply needs, integrates climate predictions, future development, and shifting demand.
- **Long-term thinking:** Sets 10–30-year goals around sustainability, resilience, and diversification of water sources.
- **Bold agenda-setting:** Champions ambitious and innovative initiatives such as seawater desalination, recycled water programs, and regional partnerships.

2. Collaborative Leadership

- **Coalition-builder:** Engages member agencies, local governments, regulators, non-profits, and community groups.
- **Cross-agency coordination:** Promotes interoperability with the State Water Project, L.A. County Flood Control, and federal regulators.
- **Internal unity:** Inspires and aligns senior staff, board members, and field teams around shared objectives.

3. Ethical Leadership

- **Integrity:** Exemplifies honesty, consistency, and trustworthiness and doing the right thing even when it's difficult or unpopular.
- **Respectful:** Treats individuals with dignity and fairness and listens to diverse opinions.
- **Fairness:** Avoids favoritism and makes decisions based on fairness and applies rules and standards consistently.
- **Transparent:** Displays openness in decision making and communicates clearly, providing information that stakeholders need to make informed decisions.
- **Responsible:** Takes responsibility for his or her actions and those of his or her team and holds himself or herself and others accountable for ethical behavior and acknowledges limits and open to feedback.

4. Innovation and Adaptability

- **Tech-forward mindset:** Explores the possible uses of AI, predictive analytics, and cybersecurity enhancements.
- **Pilot initiatives:** Quick to prototype new water treatment methods, conservation incentive programs, and rate structures.
- **Flexible operational style:** Responds effectively to challenges like drought, emergencies, infrastructure breakdowns, and regulatory shifts.

Must-Have Qualifications

1. Board Experience

- **It's the board:** Demonstrates experience working closely with and communicating effectively with a Board of Directors, including preparing reports, presenting strategic updates, and facilitating alignment between board directives and organizational goals.
- **Director communication:** Engages with individual board members and offers each member equal access to information.

2. Water Sector Experience

- **Proven track record:** Manages or deals politically with large-scale water utilities—pumping, treatment, distribution, emergency operations.
- **Technical knowledge:** Displays knowledge of water science, hydrology, treatment engineering, and reservoir/groundwater management.
- **Regulatory fluency:** Displays a working knowledge of EPA, state water quality standards, Delta conveyance rules, and complex pre-forfeiture frameworks.

3. Financial and Economic Acumen

- **Budget mastery:** Understands and has experience in overseeing multibillion-dollar capital projects, prioritized spending, and balanced operating budgets.
- **Revenue/Rate strategy:** Practices sensible, yet politically acceptable, rate structuring, funding future capex while supporting affordability.
- **Alternative financing:** Demonstrates successes dealing with grants, bonds, public-private partnerships, and creative funding for conservation programs.

4. Stakeholder and Crisis Management

- **Policy influence:** Argues effectively in legislative and regulatory arenas at the local, state and federal levels for water infrastructure funding and policy reform.
- **Public engagement:** Practices transparent, proactive communications to build trust across diverse communities.
- **Emergency leadership:** Practices calm, decisive approach in droughts, wildfires, pipeline failure, or contamination events.

5. Organizational & Human Resource Savvy

- **Talent strategy:** Leads professional development, fosters diversity, and helps succession planning.
- **Operational efficiency:** Understands the importance of leadership in influencing and implementing board policies.
- **Stakeholder balance:** Understands the need to balance demands from bargaining units and the financial needs of the organization.

6. Innovation Leadership

- **Collaborating with startups/research:** Partners with universities and tech vendors for pilot projects.
- **Data-driven culture:** Supports R&D efforts, performance dashboards, and operational transparency.
- **Environmental and resilience focus:** Emphasizes green infrastructure, ecosystem benefits, and futureproofing against climate risk.

Typical Educational & Professional Credentials

1. Degree / Certification in one or more of the following

- BS in Civil, Environmental, Hydro-engineering.
- BA or BS in Public Administration, Finance, or Environmental Management.
- JD.
- Certified Water Professional (AWWA, CWEA).
- Leadership programs (e.g., AWWA GM Workshop, WHG).
- Proven track record in major infrastructure planning and stakeholder management

Summary

An ideal GM for Metropolitan Water District:

- **Crafts and drives** a compelling vision addressing drought, climate impacts, and evolving demands.
- **Leads inclusively**, bringing together government bodies, regulators, utilities, and the public.
- **Innovates strategically**, championing tech and program pilots to stretch resources.
- **Manages complex finances**, balancing affordability with necessity through diverse funding.
- **Executes effectively**, ensuring safe, consistent deliveries and resilient infrastructure.
- **Communicates effectively** with a board and individual members of the board.

In essence: a forward-looking, collaborative, innovation-minded leader equipped with deep water-industry credentials, financial gravitas, technical expertise, and stakeholder charisma.