America's Watershed Initiative
10805 Sunset Office Drive, #400
St. Louis, MO 63127

Executive Director, America's Watershed Initiative (AWI)

Organizational Overview

America's Watershed Initiative (AWI) is a regionally recognized nonprofit organization working to advance the health and resilience of the Mississippi River Watershed through sound science, collaboration, and coordinated action. AWI began in 2012 as a steering committee and became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2018. Since then, we have brought together hundreds of leaders from business, government, academia, agriculture, conservation, and local communities to address shared challenges and opportunities across the watershed.

AWI is a small organization with a broad reach. With a staff of four, we work across a watershed spanning 31 states and encompassing more than 250 tributaries. The Mississippi River Watershed supports the environmental, economic, and cultural well-being of millions of Americans. AWI serves as a trusted convener and catalyst, bringing diverse interests together to advance practical, watershed-scale solutions that improve water quality, strengthen ecosystem health, build resilience to floods and droughts, support navigation and commerce, and sustain vibrant communities.

AWI is an independent, non-membership organization supported entirely by foundations, individuals, and corporations. We have built a strong base of committed donors, including supporters who have contributed consistently since AWI became a nonprofit.

AWI advances its mission through a combination of Science and Data Programs and Collaborative Programs. Key initiatives include the Mississippi River Watershed Partnership (MRWP), a broad coalition working toward shared watershed priorities; the Mississippi River Water Action Collaborative (MRWAC), which engages corporate and other partners in advancing water stewardship; and the Mississippi River Watershed Report Card, which provides a science-based assessment of watershed health.

With an established network of partners, a growing portfolio of programs, and a strong foundation of donor support, AWI is well positioned for its next chapter. The next Executive Director will have an opportunity to build on this foundation, expand AWI's influence, and advance practical solutions that benefit the entire Mississippi River Watershed.

Mission

AWI serves as a trusted voice across multiple sectors by uniting partners and championing sound science to secure a future in which the rivers and people of the Mississippi River Watershed thrive.

The Opportunity

The Board of Directors seeks a visionary and collaborative Executive Director to lead AWI through its next phase of growth and impact. Working closely with the Board, staff, partners, and funders, the Executive Director will provide strategic leadership, strengthen organizational capacity, expand financial resources, and elevate AWI's influence as a trusted convener across the watershed.

This is a fully remote position with no physical office. Regular travel of approximately 4 to 8 days per month is expected to meet with partners, funders, and other key stakeholders, so living near a major hub such as New Orleans, St. Louis, or Minneapolis-St. Paul is advantageous. To stay close to our staff, board members, and the communities we serve, candidates must live, or be willing to relocate to the portion of the Mississippi River Watershed.

Key Leadership Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Lead implementation of AWI's strategic plan.
- Identify emerging opportunities and challenges.
- Foster innovation and measurable impact.

Fundraising and Resource Development

- Serve as AWI's chief fundraiser.
- Cultivate relationships with foundations, corporations, agencies, and donors.
- Secure resources in excess of $500,000 per year to sustain and expand programs.

Board Relations and Governance

- Partner with the Board on strategy and governance.
- Recruit and orient new board members to AWI
- Support board committees and ensure compliance.

Partnership Development and External Leadership

- Serve as the primary spokesperson and face of AWI, representing the organization to the media, the community, and at external events.
- Sustain and expand engagement with senior leaders of federal and state agencies as well as elected officials at the state and federal level.
- Represent AWI with partners and stakeholders.
- Strengthen and expand collaborative initiatives.

Staff Leadership and Organizational Management

- Recruit, develop, and retain a high-performing team.
- Oversee finances, grants, contracts, and operations.
- Oversee payroll, billing, and budget preparation in partnership with external payroll and accounting professionals.

Ideal Candidate Profile

The successful candidate will be a collaborative and visionary leader who is passionate about the future of the Mississippi River Watershed and skilled at bringing diverse stakeholders together around shared goals. The ideal candidate will demonstrate strategic leadership, fundraising success, strong communication skills, political awareness, and a commitment to science-based collaboration.

Qualifications

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent professional experience.
- At least ten years of progressively responsible leadership experience, including organizational management, partnership development, and strategic initiative leadership.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the Mississippi River Watershed and key watershed issues, including hydrology, water quality, agriculture, and navigation.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising and resource development.
- Experience leading complex initiatives involving multiple partners, including cross-sector partnerships.
- Experience managing staff, budgets, and operations.
- Strong written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills, including public speaking.
- Residence within the Mississippi River Watershed or willingness to relocate to it.

Preferred Qualifications

- Master's degree in environmental science, natural resources, public policy, nonprofit management, business, or a related field.
- Experience working with federal and state government agencies.
- Professional experience in watershed management, conservation, agriculture, navigation, or related fields.
- Familiarity with nonprofit governance and board relations.

Why Join AWI?

This is a unique opportunity to lead one of the region’s most respected watershed organizations at a pivotal moment for the Mississippi River Watershed. The next Executive Director will help shape the future of a growing organization and advance solutions that benefit communities, ecosystems, and economies throughout the watershed.

Compensation

AWI offers a competitive salary in the range of $95,000–$125,000, commensurate with education and experience, along with a monthly stipend toward health care coverage. AWI also provides a generous package of paid time off including annual leave, sick leave, and holidays as well as flexible scheduling. AWI also provides reimbursement for approved home office equipment, supplies, and related remote work needs. Relocation benefits are not included.

How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and resume to **info@americaswatershed.org** by **December 14, 2026**. Please include "Executive Director Application" in the subject line.

Cover letters should speak to the candidate's interest in AWI's mission and their relevant experience in leadership, fundraising, and partnership development. Finalists will be asked to provide the names and contacts of three professional references. AWI is an equal opportunity employer and encourages candidates of all backgrounds to apply.