



PROGRAMS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

DEFINITION

Under general direction, performs a variety of professional and administrative activities in support of the District's conservation, public information and community outreach program; plans, organizes, coordinates, recommends and implements comprehensive District-wide community involvement, public information, media relations, conservation programs, social media management, special projects, and legislative activities; coordinates assigned activities with outside agencies; organizes, prepares and disseminates information relating to a wide range of District activities; participates in representing the District on public and media relations matters; and performs related duties as assigned.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives general direction from the Assistant General Manager. Exercises general supervision over administrative support staff, as assigned.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This is a high-level support classification responsible for planning, organizing, and managing various operations and activities of the Public Affairs Office. Incumbents regularly work on tasks which are varied and complex, requiring considerable discretion and independent judgment. This position relies on experience and judgment to perform assigned duties. Assignments are given with general guidelines and incumbents are responsible for establishing objectives, timelines, and methods to complete assignments. Work is typically reviewed upon completion for soundness, appropriateness, and conformity to policy and requirements. Performance of the work requires the use of considerable independence, initiative, and discretion within broad guidelines.

EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL JOB FUNCTIONS (Illustrative Only)

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change, or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodations where appropriate so qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job.

- Plans, manages, and implements comprehensive public relations activities, meets with other water agencies, special districts, and community organizations at a state, county, and local level; monitors and tracks applicable regulations and requirements.
- Performs responsible, confidential, and moderately complex administrative, technical and office support functions in support of departmental operations.
- Plans and conducts public relations, awareness and community involvement programs designed to create and maintain a positive image of District operations and programs.
- Promotes positive public relations through speeches, exhibits, tours and question and answer sessions; plans and coordinates special events and presentations.

- Takes proactive steps to build positive relationships with elected officials and key business, civic and community leaders; serves as an ongoing liaison, and represents the District with designated governmental agencies and other industry, professional and community groups and organizations.
- Attends meetings, answers questions and provides information on District programs and projects; works with other District staff to formulate methods and approaches for addressing community and District concerns; follows up to ensure that concerns and needs are responded to.
- Stays abreast of new trends and innovations in the field of water conservation and other water programs/policy issues.
- Oversees/participates in numerous special projects, internal projects, and meetings
- Arranges or responds to media inquiries, ranging from the routine to highly sensitive issues and incidents; prepares news releases and arranges media interviews; establishes and maintains effective media relations.
- Prepares special display materials; takes photographs for publicity purposes; plans, recommends and coordinates the development of graphic materials, including flyers, brochures, newsletters, fact sheets, bill inserts, overlays, charts and other print/graphic materials; establishes timelines and schedules.
- Conducts research and drafts responses to customer inquiries on a variety of topics.
- Monitors, creates, and executes a monthly social media plan in accordance with the District's annual strategic communications plan.
- Educates water users on conservation including landscaping irrigation plan requirements on residential and commercial developments to obtain optimum water usage and conservation.
- Develops, implements and administers comprehensive programs, policies, guidelines and procedures related to the District's water management goals.
- Analyzes and develops policies and procedures under the direction of the Assistant General Manager.
- Assists in developing support for the formation of financing districts for wastewater projects.
- Assists in identifying and developing funding sources (local, State and Federal) for capital projects.
- Tracks and monitors government regulations, laws, policies, and other government activities.
- Assists in the development of departmental budget.
- Establishes positive working relationships with District staff and Board, and the general public.
- Assumes responsibility for ensuring the duties of the position are performed in a safe, efficient manner.
- Works weekends, evenings and holidays as required to accommodate the District's needs, in addition to responding as a Disaster Emergency Service Worker.

- Performs other related duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Principles, methods and practices applied in design and implementation of public relations, community affairs and advertising programs.
- Methods and techniques of issues and image management.
- Advanced principles, practices and methods of administrative, organizational, economic, legislative and procedural analysis.
- Industry trends and media practices as they apply to developing and carrying out public information/public affairs programs.
- Advertising and public relations industry practices and trends.
- District functions and operations and associated public information and media relations issues.
- Principles, practices and techniques of distributing information for mass media communications.
- Federal, state and local laws, regulations and court decisions applicable to assigned areas of responsibility.
- Principles and practices of public administration, including budgeting, purchasing, contract administration and maintenance of public records.
- Methods and practices of effective representation of District interests before elected bodies and officials.
- Research methods and analysis techniques.
- Principles and practices of sound business communication.
- Safe work methods and safety regulations.

Ability to:

- Plan and direct a broad range of programs and services directed to building and maintaining the District's image in the community and with key stakeholders, including other governmental entities.
- Define complex public affairs and media relations issues and strategies issues, perform difficult analyses and research, evaluate alternatives and develop sound conclusions and recommendations.
- Understand, interpret, explain and apply local, state and federal policy, law, regulation and court decisions governing areas of responsibility.
- Generate interest and convey messages through the development of graphic treatments and persuasive writing.
- Apply writing styles and techniques appropriate for differing business and journalistic/public relations purposes.
- Identify and respond to community and District issues, concerns and needs.
- Understand the public information implications and evaluate the news value of District activities and functions.
- Prepare studies, reports and courses of action and present recommendations to the Assistant General Manager, General Manager and/or the Board of Directors.
- Coordinate multiple, complex projects and meet critical deadlines.
- Present proposals and recommendations clearly, logically and persuasively in public meetings.
- Develop and implement appropriate procedures and controls.
- Maintain accurate files and records.

- Respond to requests and inquiries from the media and the public.
- Exercise sound, expert independent judgment and political acumen within general policy guidelines.
- Exercise tact, diplomacy and discretion in dealing with highly sensitive, complex, confidential and controversial issues and situations.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with all levels of District management, board members, other elected and appointed governmental officials, media representatives, business and community leaders, employees, the public and others encountered in the course of work.
- Understand and follow oral and written directions.
- Work effectively with a small group or individually.
- Provide excellent customer service and resolve public concerns and complaints.
- Skillfully and safely operate a motor vehicle when required in the course of performing work duties.
- Exercise independent judgment and initiative within established guidelines.
- Operate a computer and related software at an advanced level.

Education and Experience:

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

Education:

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with major coursework in marketing, public relations, communications, public or business administration, or a related field.

Experience:

- Seven (7) years of progressively responsible community and public relations, public information, water conservation, or customer service experience involving the development and coordination of public affairs programs and projects in a management or supervisory capacity, preferably with a public agency.

Licenses and Certifications:

- Possession of a valid California Driver's License and satisfactory driving record, to be maintained throughout employment.

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 visit various District 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 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 up to 25 pounds.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

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.