

SDCERA CEO Profile

Summary

The San Diego County Employees Retirement Association (SDCERA) is the pension plan for employees of the County of San Diego and four participating employers: the Superior Court of California–County of San Diego, the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority, the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission, and the San Diego County Office of Education.

San Diego County is the fifth largest county in the United States by population, with 3.3 million residents. It covers 4,526 square miles and encompasses a widely diverse geography. The County is framed by the Pacific Ocean to the west, with the City of San Diego and incomparable beaches and beach towns, and large mountains to the east that feature the Pacific Coast Trail and the Palomar Observatory. San Diego County borders Mexico to the south, with the busiest land port of entry into the United States at San Ysidro. Central and North County hold one of the largest concentrations of technology and biotechnology companies found anywhere in the world.

San Diego County’s population and economic base are as diverse as its geography, reflecting the County’s historical roots, longstanding U.S. Navy and Marine Corps presence, attractive climate, world-class universities and colleges, and the regular inflow of residents from other U.S. states and around the world that deepen and strengthen San Diego’s economy.

The SDCERA Board of Retirement (“Board”) is responsible for administering the County pension system. It has plenary authority over the pension plan and the Trust Fund assets. The pension plan has 44,810 members and Trust Fund assets of \$12.5 billion. The role of the CEO is to administer Board policy, provide day-to-day leadership and management of SDCERA, and to connect to and interact with SDCERA’s members and key stakeholders within the County. The CEO reports directly to the Board of Retirement.

The California State Constitution, the County Employees Retirement Law, and the Board of Trustees

The State Constitution and County Employees Retirement Law provide the Board with exclusive control of the pension system and the authority to delegate its duties. The Board fulfills its fiduciary responsibilities by delegating (1) to the CEO the role of administering the pension plan, (2) to the Investment Staff the role of managing the Trust Fund assets under the Investment Policy Statement, and (3) to the Audit Committee the role of oversight of financial and operational audits and all financial reporting.

CEO Profile

The Board will evaluate CEO candidates based on two overarching capabilities. The first is the intellectual capacity to learn and master the core components of a public pension system, including actuarial science, investments, accounting/audit, information technology, and the constitutional mandate to accurately and reliably pay benefits to members and their beneficiaries. The second capability is the emotional intelligence to work for a diverse Board of nine members and two alternate members with full accountability and transparency, lead and manage SDCERA staff, and create and develop positive relationships with SDCERA's stakeholders: retired and active pension system members, the County of San Diego leadership and management teams, SDCERA participating employers, and external organizations such as the Retired Employees of San Diego County (RESDC), and the media.

The Board welcomes candidates with these capabilities and proven track records of accomplishment from pension systems, banks and insurance companies, accounting and audit firms, technology companies, pension consulting and other related industries.

CEO Responsibilities

The Board Policy on the Role of the Chief Executive Officer specifies the CEO's duties and responsibilities in the areas of: (1) administrative support to the Board; (2) investments; (3) benefits administration; (4) operations; (5) finance, actuarial, and accounting; (6) human resources; (7) legislation and litigation; (8) communications; and (9) appointment of vendors.

The Board's delegation of investment decision-making to the investment staff is delineated in the SDCERA Investment Policy Statement (IPS), which specifies that the Chief Investment Officer and CEO jointly are accountable to the Board for investment decisions and reporting. The SDCERA audit function reports to the Audit Committee of the Board. The CEO's responsibility, along with the Chief Financial Officer, is to work at the direction of the Audit Committee to support the committee's work.

The CEO and all SDCERA staff are employees of the County of San Diego. The CEO is the appointing authority for SDCERA personnel and reports to the SDCERA Board in this capacity.

CEO and SDCERA Next Generation Initiatives

Over the past five years, SDCERA has moved from an outsourced model for investments and legal matters to fully-functioning in-house investment and legal departments. SDCERA has also completed a number of multi-year efficiency initiatives that have reduced costs and decreased staff size. SDCERA is now entering a next generation phase to build out and deepen its capabilities in information technology (IT), human resources, and audit/finance. In order to guide SDCERA through this next phase of its evolution, the CEO will be expected to effectively leverage and manage the extraordinary and rapid changes in technology, work environments, and cyber security.

SDCERA's constitutional mandate is to reliably pay benefits to members and their beneficiaries. Much like a bank or an insurance company, all of the records of SDCERA's 44,810 members and the specific calculating rules are held in SDCERA's IT systems that have evolved over many years. The staff and members are in constant interaction with the records in these systems. These records are used to make monthly retiree and beneficiary payments, track contributions from current employees, and maintain an accurate balance in each member's account. Maintaining and improving SDCERA's record-keeping system, bringing IT productivity tools to SDCERA's staff, providing members secure access to their account information, and managing the increasing cyber security risks is the core of SDCERA's next generation IT work.

The CEO will guide increased HR investment in SDCERA's human capital to provide training and support for the work skills demanded by the powerful but increasingly complex information technology tools and systems available today. In addition, the ability to work remotely, quickly adopted during the COVID-19 crisis, requires a significantly expanded vision and skill set for the role of human resource management.

With the financial records and regular cash flows for the accounts of over 44,810 members, and \$12.5 billion in Trust Fund assets invested around the world with over 120 investment managers and funds, the audit and finance functions have expanded past traditional financial reporting and operation functions to include SDCERA's core system capabilities, record-keeping accuracy, and cyber security. The next generation audit and finance work for SDCERA is to deepen and enhance the role of the audit function and to incorporate the next generation of information technology.

The CEO candidate will be able to immediately embrace and lead these key SDCERA initiatives.

Educational Qualifications

The Board is searching for a candidate with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. A graduate degree, law degree, or professional accreditation such as a CPA or Actuarial Science would also be valued for these specific skills as well as their demonstration of commitment and accomplishment.

Request for Executive Search Firm Proposals

Interested executive search firms should send a written proposal to SDCERALegal@sdcera.org. The proposal should include information about the firm's background, its employees, and a proposed framework for conducting a CEO search.