

FRESHWATER

2550 University Ave Suite 212N | St. Paul, MN 55114 | 651.313.5800 | freshwater.org

We are on a mission to inspire and empower people to value and protect water – join us!

Program Director

Full-Time, Exempt | 40 hours/week with Benefits

Location: Hybrid – Office in St. Paul, MN (Court International Building – Highway 280 and University Ave.)

Remote-friendly with regular in-person collaboration and occasional travel required.

Salary range: \$90,000 – \$107,000, depending on experience

Applications submitted by October 27, 2026, will be included in a priority review.

About Freshwater

Freshwater Society is a Minnesota-based nonprofit on a mission to inspire and empower people to value and protect water. Since 1968, we have been a trusted leader in water education, research, and policy advocacy, working across sectors to build a future where clean, accessible, and sustainable water resources are available to all.

We're a collaborative, equity-driven, science-rooted organization with a strong reputation and network across the state and region. Our team-based culture fosters shared leadership, continuous learning, and innovation. We believe water connects us all – and that community-led, evidence-based solutions are the key to lasting impact.

The Opportunity

We are seeking an energetic **Program Director** as Freshwater navigates an era of exciting growth. This position is a great collaborator with experience developing, leading, and growing support for teams leading education and engagement initiatives, including existing community education and engagement and volunteer leadership programs.

Specifically, this position lives into Freshwater's organizational values in support of our mission by:

- Engaging individuals and their networks and organizations, equipping them with knowledge, connection, and confidence, so they can use these tools as leaders to define water and climate-related issues within their communities.
- Building capacity within these communities for collaborative and inclusive conversations from which innovative and equitable solutions can emerge.
- Supporting community-led initiatives grounded in the unique perspectives and concerns of these communities.

- Collaborating within Freshwater through connected and complementary work to not only equip people as inspiring communicators and effective actors but clear pathways to scale up and connect community action to broader systemic and policy change.
- Expanding engagement to include those who have been marginalized yet are most affected by water and climate-related issues.
- Expanding collaborations with artists, culture bearers, and media to elevate the value of water.
- Proactively seeking funding opportunities and managing budgets.
- Supporting our team and supervising staff.

Reporting to the Executive Director, the Program Director serves as a key member of the Freshwater Management Team and collaborates as lead within the Programs team.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership & Planning (10%)

- Collaborate with the Executive Director to set and implement goals for the program team.
- Provide strategic leadership as a member of the Management Team, contributing to overall organizational direction, decision-making, and long-term planning.

Coordinate Leadership in Programs (45%)

- Lead the implementation and evaluation of Freshwater's programs and projects to advance Freshwater's [strategic plan](#) objectives including:
 - Clean water for all communities, with a strong focus on improving public health for under-resourced communities (rural, Tribal, communities of color) while supporting healthy ecosystems.
 - Groundwater sustainability including restoration, governance, and protection.
 - Water circularity and sustainable water use through conservation, reuse, and recharge.
- Identify and pursue new initiatives that drive impact towards our vision of a future with sustainable and accessible sources of clean water that support healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies.
- Collaborate with program managers on programs, projects, and activities
 - This position will supervise 2-3 staff and interns as appropriate.
- Identify and address skills or staffing needs to fulfill program duties.
- Collaborate with program staff to develop annual budgets and work plans for Freshwater's programs and initiatives.
- Seek and leverage opportunities to promote Freshwater programs and initiatives – conference presentations, public meetings, community gatherings, etc.

Invest in Engagement (15%)

- Identify and foster positive working relationships in the public and private sectors, including outreach to culturally diverse populations.
- Attend meetings and events with partners and community members to connect and identify needs Freshwater can support.
- Support and represent Freshwater in regional and national partnerships such as the Healing our Waters Great Lakes Coalition, the US Water Alliance, and River Network.

Pursue Funding Opportunities (15%)

- Partner with the Executive Director and Director of Philanthropy to search for and submit grant and funding applications with funders, foundations, and partners.
- Participate in the cultivation and stewardship of donors, as needed.
- Build collaborative partnerships to pursue funding, as needed.

General Staff Participation & Time Off (15%)

- Actively participate in regular staff meetings and contribute to team discussions.
- Engage in internal planning sessions to align development strategies with organizational priorities.
- Attend board and committee meetings as needed to provide updates and support governance.
- Take part in organizational retreats and trainings that build team cohesion and professional capacity.
- Utilize paid holidays and PTO to rest, recharge, and maintain balance.

Experiences and Qualifications

We are looking for an energetic leader with an eye for detail as well as the ability to think and communicate the bigger picture strategically. This position also requires the ability to track several projects simultaneously and prioritize them effectively.

Necessary Experiences:

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent.
- Leadership in building and/or participating in interdisciplinary, integrated, and supportive teams.
- Program development and implementation, including program, project, and budget management.
- Community engagement.
- Ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing.
- Ability to connect our programmatic work to meaningful outcomes and impact.
- Convening, networking, and interpersonal skills.
- Experience supervising and developing staff.
- Experience with grant writing, management, and reimbursement.

Personal Qualities:

- Commitment to developing cultural competence and increased understanding and practices to advance equity and inclusion.
- Ability to be both an individual contributor and a program leader.
- Ability to think creatively and strategically.
- Ability to effectively use and analyze data to support strategic decisions.
- Exhibit a high level of personal integrity.
- Exhibit innovation and flexibility.
- Work well with, and be responsive to the needs of internal staff and external partners.
- Manage multiple and simultaneous priorities effectively to meet deadlines and demonstrate multi-tasking skills.

Preferred Experiences:

- Experience with nonprofit organizational leadership.
- Multi-sector work: research, government, community, public sector, and private sector.
- Experience with Tribal engagement and support.
- Experience with meeting facilitation.
- Outreach to geographically and culturally diverse populations.
- Experience working with rural communities.
- Reviewing and administering contracts.
- Experience with fundraising and philanthropic partnerships.
- Experience supporting interns and intern programs.

Compensation & Benefits

Freshwater's overall benefits package consistently ranks in the 90th percentile of Minnesota nonprofits (based on the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Salary & Benefits Survey), demonstrating our commitment to offering competitive compensation, comprehensive coverage, and meaningful work-life balance for our staff.

- Salary Range: \$90,000–\$107,000 annually, based on experience (benchmarked against the 2024 Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Salary & Benefits Survey).
- Medical & Dental Insurance: Comprehensive coverage with employer contributions. Employees can choose from plan options designed to fit different priorities—one with lower monthly premiums and higher cost-sharing, or another with higher monthly premiums, no deductible, and lower out-of-pocket costs. *Eligibility begins the first of the month following hire.*
- Wellness Stipend: Employees who opt out of Freshwater's health benefits receive a monthly stipend – equivalent to 20% of the individual premium for the lower-premium health plan – paid directly through payroll. This flexible benefit can be used in any way that supports personal health and well-being.

- Income Protection Benefits: Short-Term Disability, Long-Term Disability, and Life/AD&D insurance are 100% employer-paid for employees working 20+ hours per week.
- Retirement: Freshwater offers a 401(k) plan with a generous employer match – 100% of employee contributions up to 3% of gross pay, plus a 50% match on contributions from 4% to 5%. Freshwater offers a 401(k) plan with a generous employer match – 100% of employee contributions up to 3% of gross pay, plus a 50% match on contributions from 4% to 5%. *Eligibility begins the first day of the month following 90 days of employment.*
- Pre-Tax Savings: Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) for eligible medical and dependent care expenses, offered under Freshwater's Section 125 cafeteria plan.
- Voluntary Benefits: Available options include additional life insurance – spouse and dependents eligible – and vision benefits, with employee-paid premiums via payroll deduction at group rates.
- Paid Time Off: Generous PTO accruals beginning with the first payroll, plus 14 paid holidays annually.
- Work-Life Balance: Flexible hybrid work arrangements with remote options and a culture that supports using earned time off.
- Professional Development: Freshwater invests in staff growth with up to \$1,000 annually for professional development activities (subject to budget availability).
- Other Benefits: wellness initiatives, and access to transit options near our St. Paul office.

Location & Start Date

This position is open to candidates based in Minnesota, with the understanding that regular in-office meetings and some travel will be required. The anticipated start date is between November 2026 and January 2027.

How to Apply

Please submit a cover letter, resume, and contact information for three professional references (emails and phone numbers) to: **Michelle Stockness** at Freshwater@freshwater.org

Applications received by **October 27, 2026**, will receive priority review. Applications received after this date may not be reviewed if the position is filled.

We welcome requests for accommodations during the application or interview process. However, applications submitted through automated job boards will not be reviewed. Incomplete applications or those not following submission instructions will not be considered.

Freshwater Society is an equal opportunity employer. We strongly encourage applications from individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, LGBTQIA+, disabled, veterans, or who bring other diverse perspectives to our work. We value an inclusive workplace where everyone belongs and can contribute to protecting and preserving water for all.

