



Position Specification
School Employees Retirement System of Ohio
Deputy Executive Director

SERS, with approximately \$14 billion in net assets (FY2017), is searching for a *Deputy Executive Director* (Deputy) to join this highly-regarded statewide public retirement system. Located in Columbus, Ohio, SERS is the 61st largest public pension fund in the country.

System Overview

SERS is a statewide, cost sharing, multiple employer defined benefit retirement system for non-teaching persons employed by Ohio's public K-12 schools districts; vocational, technical and community schools; community colleges; and certain employees of the University of Akron. Serving over 237,000 active and retired members, and nearly 1,100 employers, SERS provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits, and access to health care coverage for eligible benefit recipients and their dependents.

SERS' mission is "To provide our membership with valuable lifetime pension benefit programs and services." The System is governed by Ohio law, and the Retirement Board is responsible for the System's general administration and management. The Board comprises nine members: four elected employee members; two elected retiree members; and three appointed investment expert members. One investment expert is appointed by the Governor, a second by the State Treasurer, and the third jointly by the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.

A SERS hallmark is its customized service delivery model where members interact directly with a benefit expert. Member, Retiree, and Employer satisfaction, as measured in the Saperstein Surveys, is at an all-time high in each of these customer groups. In February 2017, SERS began using a new state-of-the-art benefits system. The SERS Member and Retiree Tracking System (SMART), a \$30 million technology investment, replaced a legacy system and has provided efficiency and increased productivity.

Every 10 years, the Ohio Retirement Study Council hires an independent auditor to assess the fiduciary performance of each Ohio pension system. Last year, Funston Advisory Services reviewed six key areas: board governance and administration, organizational structure and staffing, investment policy and oversight, legal compliance, risk management and controls, and information technology operations. In summary, the auditor said "SERS is in a great position. It is fine-tuning rather than fixing big problems."

In some areas, especially investment operations, SERS was “setting a national standard.” There were no glaring deficiencies, but recommendations were made for continued improvements and SERS is committed to addressing the recommendations.

SERS’ investment portfolio is diversified by asset class, investment approach, and investments within each asset class to reduce overall portfolio risk and volatility. The FY2017, Total Fund net return was 13.2% versus the policy benchmark by 11.5%. At May 2018, Total Fund Return (net of fees) for the Fiscal Year was 8.9%, 1.1% for the Calendar Year and 7.5% for the Three Year period. The current actuarial assumed rate of return is 7.5%.

Overall plan funding remains sound with the funding ratio for pension benefits at FY2017 increasing from 66.7% over a 28-year period to 70.1% over a 27-year period. The health care fund, for discretionary health care benefits, increased to 15.94% from 15.38% over a 30-year period.

Public pension plans such as SERS positively impact local, state and national economies. Of the 79,150 plus members receiving pension benefits from SERS, 91% live in Ohio. In FY2017, total pension benefit payments of approximately \$1 billion were distributed among Ohio’s 88 counties, positively impacting the state’s economy. For every dollar in employer contributions invested in SERS’ pensions in FY2017, \$2.57 was returned to local economies.

For additional information, visit www.ohsers.org. A copy of the most recent Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) is available at <http://ohsers.org/financial-reports>.

SERS Culture

SERS examined its culture about 10 years ago and successfully transformed into an organization where employees are empowered and valued, and where innovation is encouraged. The change generated a strong bias for openness, transparency and collaboration to support implementation of best and leading practices throughout the organization. SERS is recognized as an employer of choice and is a place where everyone enjoys their work, and where employees are recognized and rewarded.

Deputy Executive Director Responsibilities

The position is open as a result of the retirement of Helen Ninos; she served as the Deputy of the System for nearly eight years. SERS has a history of long employee tenure; in its 80-years, there have only been seven Executive Directors. Richard Stensrud was appointed as Executive Director in early 2017 to replace Lisa Morris who retired after 12 years at the System.

The Deputy, reporting to the Executive Director, is responsible for approximately 125 people and all operations with oversight of Information Technology, Member Services, Health Care, Administrative Services, Enterprise Risk Management, and Human Resources. Direct reports include the Directors of Administrative Services, Member Services, Health Care, Human Resources; Chief Technology Officer; and Enterprise Risk Management Officer.

The General Counsel, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Investment Officer, and Senior Government Relations Officer report to the Executive Director. The Chief Audit Officer reports to the Audit Committee of the Board and administratively to the Executive Director.

Some of the essential duties and responsibilities are to:

- Oversee operations in accordance with SERS' mission, vision and values.
- Foster a positive and success-oriented accountable culture and environment.
- Lead, in collaboration with the Senior Leadership Team, the development and implementation of strategies and plans to strengthen the operational infrastructure, systems, processes, and personnel.
- Develop and implement strategic goals, operating plans, and policies to accomplish short and long-range objectives.
- Lead, motivate and further develop the skills and competencies of the high performing Senior Leadership Team.
- Oversee and participate in the design of leadership and organizational development initiatives, including leading succession planning for key positions.
- Oversee the budget planning processes and ensure adherence to the approved budget.
- Oversee action plans and initiatives necessary to meet stakeholder needs, and engage externally with stakeholders, as needed.
- Assume responsibilities of the Executive Director in his absence.

Key Objectives

The Executive Director has identified the following Key Objectives to measure, in part, the Deputy's performance. A significant portion of the responsibilities are inward facing and are focused on strengthening culture and building and improving needed skills, improving operational efficiencies, reducing costs, and improving member satisfaction levels.

- Review the resource assignments to each functional area and, if necessary, make adjustments to ensure resources (budget and headcount) align with the strategic plan.
- Develop and implement a plan to improve better collaboration among executives and the integration of their responsibilities to function as "one team" to advance greater organizational performance.
- Oversee the SMART project post implementation, including the knowledge transfer from the vendor (Sagitec).
- Actively participate in the Strategic Plan refresh and update, scheduled to be completed by January 2019.

Qualifications and Experience

The System is seeking an experienced executive, with broad operational and administrative experience, and exceptional leadership skills, who is accomplished at both tactical and strategic objectives, and dedicated to meeting the needs of customers. Other requirements and preferences include:

- Bachelor's degree required (advanced degree preferred) in business or public administration, public finance or a related field.
- Minimum of seven years of progressive experience in an operational role; preferably in a public pension plan, non-profit, governmental or public organization.
- Minimum of five years in a senior management role.
- General knowledge of finance and actuarial matters is preferred.
- Experience leading or overseeing benefits and claims administration is preferred.
- Experience overseeing enterprise system implementations is preferred.
- Executive experience interacting with public boards is preferred.
- Working knowledge of federal and state pension laws and health care plans is preferred.

Leadership Competencies and Characteristics

The ideal candidate must build a relationship with the Executive Director, becoming a trusted partner and confidant. Critical to success is embracing SERS' culture and leading with a participative and collaborative style while setting high expectations supported by accountabilities. Other key leadership competencies and attributes include:

- Open and transparent.
- Confident, humble and diplomatic.
- Inspiring, positive, and motivational.
- Effective building consensus and negotiating compromise.
- Emotional intelligence to affect positive change in a high performing culture.
- Objective and data driven decision making style.
- Courage to make tough decisions and defend them.
- Willing to be creative within the appropriate level of risk.
- Problem solver and idea person.

Compensation

The Deputy is an exempt position and an "at will" employee. Compensation is designed to attract the best-qualified executive and includes a base salary, Ohio PERS retirement benefits (24% annual contribution – 14% employer paid and 10% employee paid, employee pays no Social Security, but does pay Medicare taxes) and attractive benefits package. Relocation assistance is also provided.

Quality of Life and Living in Central Ohio

Greater Columbus, a metropolitan area of 1.7 million people, is the 14th largest city in the U.S., and the state capital. The city has a strong and diverse economy, ranking in the Top 10 overall in the U.S., based in education, insurance, health care, government, retail and technology. The Columbus region is one of the most dynamic and diverse metropolitan regions in the U.S. and is known for its value, top-ranked market access and talented workforce.

Central Ohio, with a comprehensive K-16 educational ecosystem, offers both public and private institutions with highly-regarded academic reputations. With the second highest concentration of college students in the nation, 63 colleges and universities campuses educate more than 140,000 students annually with 20,000 graduates. Within a 25-mile radius, there are many higher education choices including The Ohio State University, Columbus State Community College, Ohio Wesleyan University, Capital University, Denison University, Ohio Dominican University, Otterbein University, and Franklin University.

The vibrancy of the local culture and arts community is a major attraction with many renowned performing arts institutions, including BalletMet, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, and Opera Columbus. The Columbus Museum of Art; The Wexner Center for the Arts, a contemporary art gallery located on the Ohio State campus; and the Franklin Park Conservatory, a botanical garden, create memorable experiences for everyone.

“Buckeye Fever” permeates the Columbus culture and is a major part of the city’s identity. In addition to Ohio State, the city has the MLS Columbus Crew, NHL Blue Jackets, and the Columbus Clippers (Cleveland Indians AAA affiliate). Central Ohio is also home to the PGA Memorial Tournament, the Arnold Classic fitness expo and competition, and the All American Quarter Horse Congress.

There are many additional attractions providing fun for the family. COSI (Center of Science and Industry) is ranked the number one science center in the country and the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, is also ranked number one in the country. The Columbus public library system is also highly ranked nationally.

There are two major airports that service the city. John Glenn International Airport and Rickenbacker International Airport, a multi-modal cargo complex, a high-speed logistics hub, and a charter passenger terminal. Visit www.columbuspartnership.com, www.columbusregion.com, and www.experiencecolumbus.com for more information.

For additional information or to submit an application, please contact Hudepohl & Associates, info@hudepohl.com or (614) 854-7300.