



Policy and Research Manager

Status: Full-time

Location: Chicago-based employee with both in-person (office location is 200 W Madison St., Chicago IL 60606 through May 2026; thereafter 111 N. Canal) and virtual work is required. You must be able to work in the United States as Current does not yet have visa sponsoring capabilities.

Compensation: Salary range \$70-85k commensurate with experience

Role Structure: Reports to Current's Strategy Director; works collaboratively across Current's team and with a range of external partners, including members of the six-state Great Lakes RENEW coalition. Will manage contractors and interns. Significant room to evolve the role with increasing responsibilities and leadership as Current and Great Lakes RENEW grow and mature.

Benefits include: Health/vision/dental plans, unlimited PTO, parental leave, life insurance, retirement match (1:1 employer match up to 5% of salary), flexible work-from-home opportunities, and a dynamic and supportive work environment.

Application Deadline: February 13, 2026

To apply: Please complete our online application [HERE](#). **Do not forget to upload your CV/resume!**

JOB DESCRIPTION

Current's **Policy and Research Manager** is a cross-functional team member

responsible for the development and execution of Current's policy and engagement agenda. This is a new role that needs an ambitious and creative team player to investigate policy areas relevant to Current and Great Lakes RENEW's strategic goals, leverage partnerships and coalitions to develop policy perspectives, and create actionable, results-oriented strategies to advance policy areas. This role is not currently scoped as a lobbying role, but may evolve in the future to include lobbying activities. Applicants do not need to be a registered lobbyist but may need to in the future.

The Policy and Research Manager is a strong communicator and is passionate about helping Current impact systems that enable economic development, innovation, sustainability and circularity. The Policy and Research Manager regularly interfaces with internal and external stakeholders, and will serve as a representative of Current amongst our community of mission-aligned practitioners, policymakers, and supporters.

Areas of policy and system change interest include: water reuse, economic development incentives and business attraction, water-related workforce development policies, and more. The Policy and Research Manager does not need to be a deep expert on these topic areas, but must bring content knowledge in policy frameworks and legislative processes. Our region of service includes Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and Indiana.

Responsibilities include:

- **Policy Strategy:** Develop a coalition-backed policy engagement and education agenda for Current, and develop an actionable strategy to advance policy engagement and systems change actions supporting Current's mission.
 - **Policy Research:** Conduct research and landscaping on policy issue areas and brief internal and external stakeholders.
 - **Communication and Education:** Collaborate with Strategy Director, Senior Communications Manager, and other internal stakeholders to identify opportunities to develop educational materials, thought leadership, and other communications materials.
 - **Convening and Coalition Building:** Identify aligned policy conversations and convenings across the region of service and equip the team to attend and represent Current. Collaborate with Strategy Director, Senior Communications Manager, and partners to host events and roundtables across the region of service to advance Current's policy agenda. Facilitate

conversations to identify and action key policy actions.

- **Government Affairs:** Manage Current's government affairs strategy in collaboration with CEO and Strategy Director. May manage a government affairs team to scale up engagement.
- **Economic Development Research:** Support the Strategy Director to conduct research about the blue economy in the region of service and develop reports and presentation materials to communicate Current's impact. Support market research about technologies related to Current's mission.
- **Impact Evaluation:** Collaborate with the Strategy Director to identify and measure system change outcomes and impacts. Utilize this information to make data-informed decisions about policy strategies.
- **Executive Support and Team Learning:** Provide high-level support to the CEO and other staff in the form of talking points, presentation materials, and briefings when attending policy conversations. Build capacity across the organization for all staff members to serve as better external representatives for Current's policy priorities.
- **Resource Development:** Identify and pursue funding opportunities, grants, and partnerships to secure financial resources for program implementation and organizational growth.
- **Other tasks as assigned:** Current is a highly matrixed team of 10-15 FTE. Staff are expected to support work across the team and across reporting lines.

What we're looking for - skills and experiences:

We believe that successful candidates may not meet every qualification listed below, and encourage candidates of diverse backgrounds and experiences to apply.

- Bachelor's degree plus 5 years of experience working in a policy-related field.
- Experience in water-related policy areas preferred, but not required. Candidates with experience in other environmental or economic development campaigns or policy areas can also be successful.
- A deep understanding of policy work and legislative processes required.
- Established networks and relationships with policymakers, governments, coalitions and nonprofits in at least some part of our region of service preferred (IL, WI, OH, MN, MI, IN).
- Excellent written and communication skills, and the ability to translate complex topics to generalist audiences.
- A track record of strong facilitation and public speaking skills, and a demonstrated ability to engage and activate coalitions.

- Experience managing staff, contractors, and coalitions.
- Demonstrated project management experience, including leading beyond reporting lines and with cross-functional teams.

What we're looking for: values and attributes:

- **Passion for Current's mission and values.** You have a deep, shared commitment to the things we are passionate about: environmental stewardship; economic opportunity; technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
 - **Positive and collaborative work ethic.** You have a drive to succeed for and with our team and partners and to lift up the people, organizations, and businesses that share our goals.
 - **Network orientation.** You value relationships beyond one-off transactions and understand that in this long-term, system change work, effectiveness depends on the breadth and depth of our relationships.
 - **Creative approaches to problem solving.** You know that the first idea isn't usually the best, and you know how to push yourself and your team to come up with new approaches.
 - **Curious and learning oriented.** You want to understand your successes as well as your failures, and you're fueled by curiosity about the unknown. Everyone on our team is constantly asking questions about how the world works and how we can improve it. Comfort with ambiguity. You have a flexible and agile approach to big and small challenges and understand that progress is often nonlinear. You're willing to adapt and help Current adapt to be more resilient to our changing landscape.
 - **Accountability and humility.** You're comfortable owning responsibility for a project's execution, but happy to share credit for the final team product. You are motivated by your team's opportunities and successes, and to support the whole team in tasks that contribute to individual and team goals.
 - **Empathetic leadership.** You understand that our diverse partners across government, community, university, and industry face diverse challenges in their own work, and you listen to understand and build bridges.
 - **Results orientation.** You find ways to track and measure what matters in your work, and in Current's work. You're rigorous about sharing those results with the team and when appropriate, our partners.
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WHO WE ARE

[Current](#) is a water innovation hub working to grow a circular blue economy, accelerate water innovation, and solve pressing water challenges. Chicago is our freshwater home but our cross-sector partnerships stretch across Illinois, the Great Lakes region, and the world. We want to export our home-grown solutions to help solve the world's water challenges and bring the best ideas from around the world to solve ours.

In early 2024, Current led the successful launch of [Great Lakes RENEW](#), a regional, cross-sector coalition that was announced as one of nine inaugural National Science Foundation (NSF) Regional Innovation Engines nationwide. Great Lakes RENEW (Recovery of Energy, Nutrients, critical Elements, and Water) is addressing a critical challenge: conventional wastewater treatment systems weren't designed to recover valuable resources or remove dangerous contaminants from our water. To solve this challenge, RENEW is leading the transition to a circular blue economy by driving innovation, economic growth, and workforce development in the Great Lakes region.

What do Current's team members love about working at Current?

- Working on high-impact projects and knowing that our work is contributing solutions to major environmental and economic challenges
- Opportunities to connect with high-level leaders across multiple industries. Valuable network building and learning
- Collaborating with others who share a passion for water, the environment, and creating economic opportunity
- Flexible working hours and environment and respect for life-work balance
- A culture that is welcoming, curious, collaborative, collegial, and committed to continuous improvement
- The start-up energy of our organization, fluid and dynamic and evolving with significant opportunity to advance and grow from within.

OUR VALUES:

Our values build the foundation of our organizational culture; our values ground and support us and our efforts to deliver on Current's mission.

- **Collaboration.** Current knows that reaching consensus and building trust are key aspects of maintaining and improving our access to clean water. This requires diplomacy and communication to gain the needed insights from a wide variety of project partners. Our work is powered by partnerships. Collaboration begins with listening and setting tables where diverse views,

perspectives, and needs can be shared safely in the spirit of developing common solutions.

- **Creativity and Innovation.** Creativity and innovation require environments where diverse perspectives and ideas can be freely shared and debated. Everyone on our team should feel the freedom to question, to learn, to experiment, and to fail.
- **Inclusion.** To solve persistent water challenges and build a stronger blue economy, we need diverse perspectives on both problems and solutions. We value diversity in our team and among our partners, at our tables and in our audiences. We strive to ensure that our work benefits our community.
- **Expertise:** Current maintains a sophisticated understanding of the state of the art in water technology. This field of study changes every day, requiring both deep knowledge and a willingness to adjust our understanding based on new discoveries.
- **Independence:** Current is a nonprofit that is not beholden to any stakeholders but rather has established a mission of advocating for sustainable water solutions that help the public at large.
- **Justice.** We acknowledge that justice – racial justice, social justice, economic justice, gender justice – is fundamental to our work of building a healthier economy and environment. We aim to identify the injustices that create barriers to our work, and to make diligent strides to remedy them.
- **Risk-seeking:** Current is not an advocate for the status quo. It's an advocate for the wise use of water to sustain the Earth's population – a mission that requires us to think big and act aggressively to see what works and what doesn't. If we're waiting for guarantees that a new approach will work, we'll never try anything different. Rational risk-taking is part of our ethos.
- **Sustainability.** Through our work and in our daily practices, we strive to conserve and reuse our natural resources, to meet present needs with minimal cost to future generations.

PARTNER PROMISES

- We promise to discover and promote new approaches and technologies that help solve water challenges. A combination of well-defined mission and professional curiosity drive us to find and share the best answers for difficult problems.
- We promise to challenge old thinking. One of Current's primary missions is to build trusted partnerships to help achieve breakthroughs that go beyond the

status quo.

- We promise to keep an open mind: Current believes that attitude and outlook are important. Being receptive to new ideas and constantly seeking new sources of information are the only ways to stay at the forefront of our fields.
- We promise to be a strong partner. Current takes a hands-on approach to the projects it chooses and makes long-term investments in them.
- We promise to take care of our environment. Current is in the sustainability business. We never forget the fact that today's decisions can have major impacts in the world that people encounter decades from now.
- We promise to be an unbiased advocate for the best water solutions. While we work with many partners, our greatest duty is to the public at large and their quality of life. We will always be an honest broker.

READ MORE:

- Read Current's [2025 Impact Report](#)
- Download [Upstream IL: Strategies to Boost Illinois' Blue Economy](#), Current's blueprint for inclusive growth and innovation in the blue economy
- Access [H2NOW](#), real-time water quality monitoring for the Chicago and Calumet rivers, and read our [2024 H2NOW Chicago Impact Report](#)
- For more information on Great Lakes RENEW, our National Science Foundation-backed Regional Innovation Engine, please visit greatlakesrenew.org
- Follow us on social media: [LinkedIn](#) | [Instagram](#)
- Stay up to date by subscribing to Current's [monthly newsletter](#)