



Where Innovation Flows

Commercialization Director

Position Type: Full-time.

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

Role Structure: Reports to Executive Director; works as part of a senior team including the Technical Program Director, Operations Director, and Strategy Director. Applicants should feel comfortable working in a fast-paced, start-up environment, requiring flexibility with tasks and roles.

Salary and Benefits: \$135,000 - \$175,000 per year.

Salary will be set based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to qualifications, experience, education, licenses, and specialized training. The above hiring range represents Current's good faith and reasonable estimate of the range of possible compensation at the time of posting.

Benefits Include: Health care plan, unlimited PTO, parental leave, life insurance, 5% retirement match, and flexible work-from-home opportunities.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Current is seeking an entrepreneurial leader with a passion for technology and commercialization and a strong desire to drive innovation in the water and climate sectors and related industries.

The field of water-related technologies is rapidly evolving. We are looking for a leader who appreciates the technical and commercial complexity inherent in deploying and scaling water solutions but is also willing to work diligently to identify and break down all types of barriers to implementation through innovative programs and product offerings. As the Commercialization Director, you will play a pivotal role in shaping the long-term strategy of Current's key initiatives, including [Great Lakes ReNEW](#) - Current's NSF-funded Regional Innovation Engine, and Current's water technology accelerator.

As a collaborative organization, we work with a wide range of impact-oriented practitioners, and need a commercialization leader who relishes the challenges of working across technical domains, sectors and issues. This role includes management responsibilities for contractors, interns, and vendors with possible management of full-time employees as we grow. We are looking for someone who excels at clear communication and creative partnership development.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Commercialization Director will lead a suite of programs and support structures with the goal of accelerating the development, adoption, commercialization and scale-up of technologies that address a wide range of water- and climate-related challenges. Specifically, this role is responsible for identifying the most promising technologies –including those “home grown” within Current's own partner consortia and companies recruited to engage - and systematically supporting their development through pilot and demonstration partnerships and commercial scaling opportunities.

Convening and partnership development:

- Lead engagement with the Current Industry Consortium, including recruiting new and managing existing members from industries across Great Lakes ReNEW areas of focus (including manufacturing, agriculture, food and beverage, energy, and others). Collaborate with the Technical Program Director to identify industry priorities to inform the R&D portfolio.
- Convene and oversee the ReNEW Translation Working Group, composed of expert accelerators, incubators, investors, entrepreneurship support organizations and testbeds.
- Provide a critical bridging role across ReNEW verticals: R&D, Translation (commercialization), and Inclusive Ecosystems (workforce development, STEM education). Act as a liaison to multiple consortia (Research, Industry) and working groups (Inclusive Ecosystem, Utility) to implement the commercialization goals of Current and ReNEW.

- Collaborate with senior ReNEW personnel on combined R&D and commercialization strategy. Own creative commercialization thinking to drive key strategic initiatives, and provide thought leadership and participation on behalf of Current in industry events/panels and publications.
- Build connections outside the ecosystem to make Current/Great Lakes ReNEW relevant nationally, attract more partners and collaborators, and broaden the reach and impact.

Program strategy and support structures

- Working closely with the Current's Technical Program Director, create a strategy to provide end-to-end commercialization support from TRL 1-9 across the region, with deeper focus on TRLs 4 and up, with special attention to filling gaps between existing offerings. Lead a suite of commercialization projects, including:
 - Building and staffing Current's accelerator program in Chicago.
 - Execute partnerships with existing accelerator programs and entrepreneurship support organizations to deliver resource recovery-focused cohorts.
 - Identify and evaluate new pilot opportunities with industry, utility, and community partners.
 - Coordinate with senior Current personnel to establish a centralized intelligent water resource recovery testbed system in Chicago, including subsystem testbeds across the Great Lakes Region (Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin).
- With the senior leadership team and evaluation partner, develop key metrics and measures to track progress of commercialization efforts to inform continuous improvement, performance management, and evaluation.
- Design and develop core partner agreements for Great Lakes ReNEW and other major initiatives. Work with Current's leadership team to develop a Master Consortium Agreement (MCA), informed by other relevant models and laying the foundation for desired end-state core functions, capacities, and capabilities for ReNEW (e.g., including IP and data sharing considerations).
- Identify and secure additional support (legal, insurance, staffing, etc.) needed to deliver on commercialization goals.
- Continually evaluate offerings and benchmark best practices outside the Great Lakes ReNEW ecosystem for continual improvement.

Capital attraction and deployment

- Refine ReNEW investment and creative capital deployment plan, including:

- Supporting external partners to investigate and launch a new ReNEW investment fund.
- Converting corporate/industry prospects to full members of Current's Industry Consortium.
- Identifying philanthropic and government funding opportunities to support broader commercialization goals.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Bachelor's degree required, MBA or related graduate degree preferred.
- Experience working to commercialize and grow startups (including previous work with accelerators, incubators, investment funds, industry, tech transfer offices, or other related work).
- Experience with corporate engagement, including recruitment, convening, and relationship management.
- 10+ years in leadership positions with general management across a variety of roles within the technology/commercialization industry preferred.

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.
- 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.

WHO WE ARE

Current is a Chicago-based nonprofit water innovation hub. Our mission is to grow an inclusive blue economy, accelerate adoption of innovative water technologies, and solve pressing water challenges. Founded in Chicago in 2016 in partnership with the City of Chicago, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, World Business Chicago, and the region's research universities, Current builds collaborations among diverse, cross-sector leaders to develop solutions that would be too risky or even impossible for any one group to undertake alone. While Chicago is our home, it is not our only market. Current exists to help export our region's home-grown solutions to help solve the world's water challenges and bring the best ideas from around the world to solve ours.

ABOUT GREAT LAKES ReNEW:

Great Lakes ReNEW was selected as part of the National Science Foundation's Inaugural Regional Innovation Engine Awards, launched in March 2024. ReNEW is a six state consortium serving the Great Lakes Region focused on resource recovery, aimed at accelerating the transition to a decarbonized circular water economy.

Our mission: To invent new ways to extract valuable minerals and toxic forever chemicals from our wastewater. We are doing this for the people and communities in our region most harmed by economic and environmental injustice. Because, in a world of increasing water and resource scarcity, "waste" has no place.

ReNEW is designed to discover, develop, and deploy materials, sensors, technologies, and processes that will accelerate and enable resource recovery (e.g., nutrients, critical minerals, energy, water) from wastewater and nontraditional water sources, facilitating the delivery of cost-effective and energy efficient fit-for-purpose water. In doing so, ReNEW will minimize wasted resources, maximize marketable products, and enable a decarbonized circular water economy.

ReNEW employs a convergent, collaborative, transdisciplinary approach to strategically engage and connect the expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders including: research institutions; minority-serving institutions (MSIs); industries; utilities; workforce development, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education, and entrepreneurship experts; and investors across the Great Lakes region.

Great Lakes ReNEW has three components: Use-Inspired R&D, Commercialization, and Workforce Development (Inclusive Ecosystems). Aligned, coordinated, and motivated by the shared vision and goal of achieving technologies that will preserve Great Lakes water resources and power economic opportunities, ReNEW will generate and export solutions to water challenges across the U.S. and the world.

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, with 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 open, collaborative, collegial, and continuously improving
- The start-up energy of our organization, fluid and dynamic and evolving

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.

