



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

GENERAL INFORMATION

Status:	Full-time	Reports to:	Technical Program Director
Compensation:	\$75,000-85,000 Salary is commensurate with experience	Location:	Chicago, IL (Both in-person and virtual work required)
Role structure:	This role works collaboratively across Current's team and with a range of external partners, including members of the six-state Great Lakes RENEW coalition.		
Benefits:	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		

Applicants must be legally authorized to work in the U.S. without sponsorship. Please note that Current is not able to provide visa sponsorship.

Current provides equal employment opportunity as required by law to all qualified individuals without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy (including childbirth and conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), age, marital status, physical or mental disability, veteran or military status, citizenship status, order of protection status, or any other protected classification. This policy applies in all aspects of employment, including without limitation recruitment, hiring, training, evaluation, promotion, demotion, discipline, compensation, benefits, and termination.

Application deadline: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2026 at 11:59 PM, CT

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ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Job Description:

Current seeks a Research & Development Manager to drive innovation in the rapidly evolving water technology sector. We need a leader who thrives in complex environments and can effectively partner with impact-oriented practitioners across diverse R&D domains – from PFAS sensing to nutrient and critical minerals recovery from wastewater.

As the Research & Development Manager at Current, you will play a pivotal role in supporting, executing, and managing the R&D programs and initiatives aimed at fostering research and innovation in the water sector. You will lead collaborative efforts, manage project lifecycles, and drive forward impactful programs that address pressing water challenges while promoting sustainable and innovative technology solutions. We are looking for a collaborative leader who understands the technical and commercial complexities of scaling

water technologies and thrives on breaking down barriers to implementation alongside a diverse network of impact-oriented practitioners.

While a strong foundation in the sciences is essential, this role operates at the intersection of technical research and ecosystem leadership. Success requires moving beyond traditional independent research to actively build alignment across academic, industry, and government stakeholders. Core competencies for this role include:

- **Project & Portfolio Management:** Oversee complex, multi-stakeholder R&D projects from conception to completion, establishing clear project scopes, coordinating timelines, and ensuring rigorous tracking of deliverables and funding milestones.
- **Strategic Convening:** Bring together diverse, cross-sector practitioners to align on shared R&D objectives and regional innovation roadmaps. A customer service orientation to partner engagement.
- **Partnership Cultivation:** Proactively identify synergies between academic researchers and industry leaders to build long-term, mutually beneficial coalitions that advance the water innovation sector.
- **Technical Translation & Communication:** Distill complex scientific data and research into compelling, accessible narratives for diverse audiences.
- **Cross-Functional Facilitation:** Guide working groups, peer-review panels, and steering committees through complex discussions to reach consensus and actionable outcomes.

Key Responsibilities:

R&D Portfolio Management

- Work with staff, consultants, and partners to manage Current's 20+ project R&D portfolio focused on wastewater resource recovery (selective separation and detection technologies).
- Drive the annual R&D Request for Proposals (RFP) cycle: draft criteria, coordinate technical peer-review panels, field partner questions, and track progress.
- Support the RENEW R&D community through engagement with project PIs, senior researchers, postdocs, and graduate students.
- Support data collection, technical documentation, evaluation and learning, and compliance reporting (e.g., grant updates, end-of-year summaries) related to the R&D portfolio.
- Actively contribute to Current's overall R&D growth and strategic direction as we evolve to meet the changing needs of our research community.
- Support engagement with technology end-users, including feed-forward of end-users' needs to help shape R&D priorities.

Partner Convening and Relationship Building

- Lead and facilitate project-specific RENEW working groups, subcommittees, and partner meetings. Examples include the subcommittee developing RENEW's resource recovery technical roadmap and the symposium planning subcommittee.
- Evaluate and respond to partner inquiries, assessing the feasibility and strategic priority of new opportunities.
- Represent Current at regional and national convenings to cultivate relationships with partners and the broader ecosystem.

Technical Communication

- Translate complex technical data into accessible materials for media inquiries, internal team learning opportunities, presentations for meetings and fundraising, and other communication materials.
- Communicate clearly and creatively about Current's programs and mission and effectively connect with our wide range of audiences.

Cross-Functional Collaboration

- Operate flexibly within a highly matrixed team of 10-15 full-time employees, supporting initiatives across standard reporting lines.
- Collaborate with the Technical Program Director and the Workforce Development Director to connect R&D projects and their leads to workforce programming, including internships, work-based learning, and student and postdoc engagement across the RENEW research community.
- Collaborate with the Technical Program Director and the Commercialization Director to integrate R&D projects, end-user engagement, and commercialization strategy.
- Lend technical expertise to Current's K-12 STEM education and workforce programming, including reviewing curriculum and instructional materials, serving as a resource for student and teacher-facing events, and connecting R&D projects to learning opportunities.

SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

What we're looking for...

Qualifications:

- B.S. in engineering, biology, chemistry, environmental science, aquatic sciences, or related fields.
- M.S. degree preferred but not required.
- 3-5 years of experience in program management.

Skills and Experience:

- Ability to both work independently as well as collaboratively on a team.
- Demonstrated project/program management experience, including leading beyond reporting lines and with cross-functional teams.
- Strong and clear communicator, with the ability to translate and distill complex concepts to many different audiences.
- Excellent organizational and project management skills. Ability to handle multiple priorities, organize, plan, meet deadlines and multi-task in a fast-paced start-up environment.
- Experience managing staff, contractors, and coalitions.
- Working knowledge of environmental engineering and water utility infrastructure, with experience in various processes including water treatment, water quality, and wastewater.
- Familiarity with applied water research and technology commercialization processes.
- Experience with producing technical reports and delivering professional presentations.

ABOUT CURRENT

[Click here to learn more](#) about who we are, our values, partner promises, and more.