

Introduction

Sustainability First is a charity and politically neutral think tank. We promote change in the water and energy sectors for a fairer, more sustainable future. For over twenty years we have provided constructive challenge and a safe space to convene thought leadership across the energy and water sectors, working as a critical friend to business leaders, regulators, and policymakers. We are proud of our achievements over this time and have built a formidable reputation as a trusted authority, helping to apply theory on sustainability to the practical challenges that these utilities sectors face. We also engage the wider public on issues and opportunities in the energy and water sectors, through citizens workshops, and creative projects with artists, writers, young people, and communities.

As we refresh our strategy, we are seeking to expand and augment our team of Associates. Our Associates are central to our work, with a depth of sector-specific knowledge, relationships and networks that helps our organisation to build traction and influence. Our Associates provide a range of services including conducting research, authoring reports, drafting consultation responses, providing peer review support internally and to our clients, developing project proposals and funding bids, providing stakeholder facilitation (e.g., through round table discussions), and client liaison. There may be opportunities to lead specific projects from time to time, especially when these are closely aligned with an Associate's subject matter expertise.

Outline role description

Thought leadership: Work with the Trustees, associates, staff team, and others to proactively develop our policy vision for the organisation in terms of sustainability and essential services. Provide intellectual leadership, responding to emerging events and relevant policy discussions, and with the Executive Director, build and maintain partnerships and represent the organisation in key external fora. Augment the team of associates to retain innovative insights and proposals to mainstream sustainability.

Policy development, management, and assurance: Working with the small staff and associate teams, actively develop policy positions in key external areas for the corporate strategy. Ensure effective and timely project management and quality assurance of key policy outputs.

Project delivery and new projects: Alongside members of the team, deliver existing projects that Sustainability First is undertaking. If significant new projects are developed that need your expertise, your time commitment will be varied in agreement with you according to the time needed for the project.

Income generation: Where possible build policy relationships with key stakeholders that can lead to income generation from companies and government funders for major projects. Work with the Executive Director and associates to help to generate new income sources and undertake direct consultancy work.

Working relationship

Practically, we offer our Associates a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that underpins our ongoing working relationship, which is then supplemented with contracts for specific pieces of work. Our pricing is staged to recognise the different status of work, with an 'internal funded' rate of pay, an 'external chargeable' rate and occasional unfunded internal work and participation on a voluntary basis. As a charity, we always need to balance our budgetary constraints with our ongoing need to maintain access to expertise, and with our charitable purposes.

Skills and experience

We are looking for individuals with the following skills and experience:

- Subject matter expertise in sustainability, particularly in the water and energy sectors, with knowledge of policy, regulatory frameworks, and industry trends.
- Proven thought leadership and ability to develop policy positions, respond to emerging events, and influence relevant discussions.
- Strong project management skills to deliver policy projects and ensure timely and high-quality outputs.
- Ability to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders, represent the organisation in external fora, and engage in high-level discussions.
- Experience in income generation through policy relationships and securing funding for major projects.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills to convey complex ideas and represent Sustainability First effectively.
- Strategic thinking and analytical skills to align policy objectives with organisational goals and identify opportunities for mainstreaming sustainability.
- Commitment to sustainability, social equity, and driving positive change in the water and energy sectors.

The role is well suited to individuals who work on a freelance basis, have a portfolio career and/or work part-time.

If you are interested in this role, please send a CV and covering letter to info@sustainabilityfirst.org.uk

For more information and an informal conversation about the role, please contact David Murray on david.murray@sustainabilityfirst.org.uk.