

Research and Projects Officer

POSITION DESCRIPTION

About Sustain

Sustain exists to champion the transition to healthy, equitable, resilient and sustainable food systems. We empower people, governments and organisations with the knowledge, tools and connections they need to become agents of food system transformation.

As a national food systems organisation, Sustain works across three strategic pillars:

- Capacity Building
- Network Facilitation
- Advocacy

Through these pillars, we support governments, communities and organisations to strengthen food systems knowledge, build cross-sector collaboration and drive systems-level change.

Sustain works as a connector, facilitator and enabler within the food systems sector. We focus on building capability, supporting collective action and translating food systems knowledge into practical action.

Role Summary

The Research and Projects Officer is responsible for delivering consulting and capacity-building projects that support local governments, public health units, community organisations and other stakeholders to strengthen healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems.

Reporting to the Consulting and Engagement Manager, this role coordinates project delivery from initiation through to completion, including research, report writing, project management, stakeholder engagement, administration and client communications.

The role requires a highly organised and methodical project officer who can balance multiple projects simultaneously while maintaining strong relationships with clients and stakeholders. The successful candidate will have strong project management, research and communication skills and experience, high attention to detail, and an ability to translate complex information into practical and plain language recommendations.

Key Responsibilities

1. Project delivery & client management

- Coordinate the delivery of consulting (research and capacity-building) projects from planning through to completion
- Develop and maintain project plans, timelines, budgets and deliverables
- Act as a key day-to-day contact for project clients and stakeholders
- Ensure projects are delivered on time, within scope and to a high standard
- Monitor project progress and proactively identify and address risks and challenges
- Coordinate project meetings, working groups and stakeholder engagement activities
- Prepare project updates, briefing papers and client communications
- Support project evaluation and reporting activities

2. Research, analysis & report writing

- Undertake desktop research, literature reviews and environmental scans
- Conduct food systems and food security mapping and needs assessments
- Conduct and analyse quantitative and qualitative research to identify key findings and recommendations
- Develop project reports, discussion papers, consultation summaries and policy documents
- Support the development of strategic plans, food system assessments and policy recommendations
- Ensure all written outputs are accurate, evidence-based and tailored to client needs
- Contribute to the development of practical resources, tools and case studies

3. Stakeholder coordination & relationship management

- Build and maintain productive relationships with local government officers, community organisations and project partners
- Support the Consulting and Engagement Coordinator to maintain stakeholder records and CRM systems
- Coordinate stakeholder communications and meeting logistics
- Identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing between stakeholders
- Represent Sustain professionally in meetings, workshops and sector events

4. Organisational support & continuous improvement

- Contribute to the development of project templates, tools and systems
- Contribute to the growth and activation of the Australian Food Network through participation, relationship-building and content development
- Support monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement activities
- Assist with grant reporting and project acquittals as required
- Participate in team meetings, planning processes and organisational activities
- Support the delivery of Sustain's broader strategic objectives where appropriate

5. General

- Participate in team meetings, planning processes and organisational activities
- Represent Sustain within relevant professional, government and sector networks
- Ensure activities are delivered in alignment with Sustain's policies, values and strategic priorities
- Contribute positively to Sustain's culture, relationships and organisational development

Key Selection Criteria

Essential

- Demonstrated experience in project coordination, project management or consulting delivery
- Strong research, analysis and report-writing skills
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Experience collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data
- Excellent organisational and time-management skills with the ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously
- Strong attention to detail and ability to work methodically
- Ability to build productive relationships with clients, community members and stakeholders
- Understanding of food systems, food security, public health, sustainability, community development or related fields
- Ability to work independently while contributing positively within a small team
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office, Google Workspace and project management software
- Current Working with Children Check or willingness to obtain one

Desirable

- Knowledge of food policy, food security, public health or systems change approaches
- Experience undertaking community engagement and stakeholder consultation processes
- Experience working with diverse communities, including CALD communities and/or young people
- Experience working with local government and/or community sectors
- Experience developing strategic plans, policy documents or community plans
- Experience using Airtable, CRM systems or project management platforms
- Qualification in public health, community development, sustainability, food systems, social sciences, planning or a related field

Employment Conditions

Reporting and working relationships

This position reports to the Consulting and Engagement Manager. The incumbent will develop strong, collaborative working relationships with other Sustain staff, consultants and clients.

Staff performance and development

Sustain staff may undertake allocated duties not specifically mentioned in their position description but within the capacity, qualifications and experience normally expected from persons occupying positions at a similar level. This provides opportunities for staff to develop new skills and expertise.

Performance targets and expectations will be negotiated at the beginning of the contract as well as when undertaking new project responsibilities. A 6-monthly review project and annual performance review will provide opportunities to monitor progress and discuss performance and development needs. Where budgets allow, staff will be supported to develop skills and knowledge relevant to the position through attendance at workshops/events and/or participation in training activities.

Contract: Part time 12-month contract (0.8 FTE). Possibility of contract extension and increase in FTE allocation subject to performance and availability of funding. Salary packaging up to \$15,900 pa for general living expenses.

Hours: To be negotiated and align with work patterns of key team members.

Hourly rate: \$46/hour plus super

Places of work: 59A Roseberry Av, Preston (Primary) / From home. Must be available to attend in-person meetings and activities in and around Melbourne.