

Senior Research Officer

Role: Senior Research Officer

Location: Ryton with some flexible working

Key Requirements: An understanding of sustainable food procurement in the UK, along with proven research skills to ensure the successful delivery of multi-faceted research projects. Combined with an ability to design and deliver workshops, along with collaborating effectively with schools, local food groups and organisations at all stages of the food chain.

Hours: Full-time (35 hours week)

Duration: Fixed Term until September 2028

Salary: £28-32K pe annum

Role subject to DBS Check: No

About us:

At Garden Organic we care about organic growing, composting, seed conservation, research and citizen science. Our small but hugely knowledgeable and committed team is backed by a family of members and volunteers, all dedicated to growing food and flowers in harmony with nature. We are an established, experienced and innovative membership charity, working in communities around the UK and campaigning for organic practice which protects and promotes life above and below the soil. Now in our seventh decade, we are also home to the vitally important Heritage Seed Library a living collection of 800 rare vegetable varieties that otherwise would have died out.

Our mission is to show people how to be organic growers and in doing so, we strive to be a great place to work, volunteer or partner with. We care about what we do, how we do it, and the impact we make. We believe that our time is now – when people are actively seeking positive contributions that they can make in the face of biodiversity loss and climate change.

About the role:

Key responsibilities include the design and facilitation of workshops, evaluation and exploitation of research, stakeholder engagement, and collaborating on research outputs, reports and deliverables. You will play a significant role in contributing to the project's impact while supporting your own professional development.

The project is led by Coventry University's Centre for Agroecology, Water, and Resilience (CAWR) focusing on sustainable, place-based food procurement in the UK.

This position will work with a similar role within CAWR to deliver a range of research and dissemination activities across the project.

- The project involves interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, utilizing living case studies of community food hubs (Cultivate Food Hub – Wales, Cambridge Food Hub, The Better Food Shed – London and Galloway Food Hub – Scotland) and open-source socio-technical innovations like the Open Food Network (OFN).
- It aims to drive transformative changes in food systems by addressing research questions related to small-scale producers, open-source innovations, place-based governance, sustainability impacts, and scaling mechanisms.
- The project involves multi-actor collaboration, data management practices, ethical considerations, and aims to create environmentally sustainable, local food systems while engaging stakeholders and contributing to policy development.
- The core team includes individuals from Coventry University, Garden Organic, and Social Farms & Gardens, with partners from organizations like Soil Association, Birmingham City Council, and Open Food Network involved in the project.
- The project runs for 48 months from October 2024, aiming to generate new knowledge and drive just, sustainable transitions in food systems.

You will be reporting to our Research Manager, and your core responsibilities and main duties are as follows:

1. Day-to-day management and delivery of the research project P4G.
2. Manage the internal communications with other GO staff involved with the project.
3. Be the day-to-day conduit with the project leader (CAWR).
4. Undertake research into public procurement focusing on the use of living case studies through.
 - 4.1. Stakeholder mapping and analysis,
 - 4.2. on-farm surveys
 - 4.3. local data collection through interviews with procurers and producers, focus groups, mapping current procurement
5. Developing market dialogues with farmers, chefs, kitchen staff, school leaders, and procurement officers to develop mutual understanding and contribute ideas to public food tender design.
6. Working with the food hubs, and Heritage Seed Library, to implement small scale crop trials which will require travel throughout the UK.
7. With our Head of Knowledge Transfer, work with local schools to improve their understanding of where food comes from and the role they play within local food systems, linking directly to aspects of the curriculum including food diversity and climate resilience.

8. Supporting Garden Organic Staff in project communications (across a range of media types), dissemination of findings and impact assessment.

What we are looking for:

We are looking for someone who has experience and understanding of working with local food groups and potentially an understanding of local procurement. They would have a research background and some experience in project management and working within a wider team of senior colleagues.

What we can offer:

- Salary: £28-32,000 per annum
- 25 days Holiday plus bank holidays and additional leave at Christmas (pro-rata)
- Additional long service holiday
- Group Pension Scheme with 8% employer contribution
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Salary Extras benefits platform (Instant discount scheme and health, wellbeing and financial support)
- We Care benefits platform (With access to virtual GP consultations, nutritionist support, get fit programmes, smoking cessation and further health and wellbeing support)
- TOIL for additional hours worked
- Life Assurance
- Garden Organic membership

Person Specification:

Experience	Essential	Desirable
Prior research experience related to public food procurement and the use of participatory research approaches.		✓
Understanding of socioeconomic approaches to research	✓	
Project Management including budget management		✓
Partnership working across a range of sectors		✓
Facilitating events and workshops		✓
Developing project communications in a range of media		✓
Working within the local food sector		✓
Working with academics		✓

Knowledge and Skills		
Degree/Higher Degree or equivalent, or relevant experience	✓	
Knowledge of the local food sector		✓
Ability to communicate effectively with people at all levels	✓	
Ability to work as part of a team	✓	
Ability to work under minimal supervision, to make decisions and act on own initiative	✓	
Ability to work effectively under pressure and handle changing priorities	✓	
Ability to prioritise workloads and deal effectively with competing demands	✓	
High level of written communication skills	✓	
Excellent IT skills and the ability to work effectively within MS365 ecosystem	✓	
Approach and Mindset		
Prepared to undertake occasional out of hours work	✓	
An appreciation of and commitment to Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Data Protection issues in the workplace	✓	
A commitment to Equal Opportunities in all workplaces	✓	

How to Apply:

All applicants must complete a Garden Organic Application Form along with a covering letter explaining why you think you would be a great fit for the role. We pay close attention to covering letters so please do send us one. Our application form can be downloaded via our website at www.gardenorganic.org.uk

We will be reviewing applications on a rolling basis and we reserve the right to close the vacancy early depending on response levels.

As part of our commitment to diversity and inclusion applications will be anonymised before being submitted to our recruitment panel.

Recruitment Timetable:

Application Deadline: Monday 18th November

Interview Dates: Week of 2nd December

Interview Location: Ryton, CV8 3LG

Equal Opportunities:

At Garden Organic we embrace diversity and recognise the value it brings to our organisation. As such, we match charity needs with the skills and experience of candidates and welcome candidates from various backgrounds irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender identity or reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation. We are committed to fostering an inclusive workplace and take pride in ensuring that everyone feels welcome, respected and empowered.

Garden Organic is also a Disability Confident Employer and aims to create opportunities wherever possible. It should be noted that some of our roles require travel and attendance at events where accessibility arrangements will vary.

Safer Recruitment:

Garden Organic is also committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and expects employees, associates and volunteers to share this commitment. We may require some candidates to undertake a DBS check relevant to the requirements of the role.

Please note that we only accept applications from individuals with the right to work in the UK. We are unable to sponsor working visa applications.

To find out more about our Charity, our ambition, our successes and why it is a great time to be joining Garden Organic, along with our Privacy Statement please head to our website at www.gardenorganic.org.uk