



**RESOURCES**  
*for the* **FUTURE**

# Position Specification

**Resources for the Future, Inc.**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

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Ref: Chief Executive Officer  
Resources for the Future, Inc.

## Our Client

Resources for the Future is an independent, nonprofit research and policy engagement institution in Washington, DC.

### Mission and Values

RFF's mission is to improve environmental, energy, and natural resource decisions through impartial economic research and policy engagement.

They are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization that embraces five core values:

- **Balance:** Improving both environmental and economic outcomes.
- **Rigor:** Adhering to the highest scientific and professional standards.
- **Independence:** Prioritizing nonpartisanship, integrity, and trust.
- **Respect:** Building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.
- **Results:** Leading to better public- and private-sector decisions.

### Vision

RFF's widely trusted research insights and policy solutions advance a healthy environment and thriving economy, equitably support people and communities, and help solve climate change.

Their experts bring the brightest economic thinking to bear on our future, shaping many of the world's most successful environmental decisions and policies over the past 70 years. Today, they are applying their expertise to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, build resilience, and solve the climate challenge.

### By the Numbers, in RFF's words:



We're a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a \$17.5m budget.



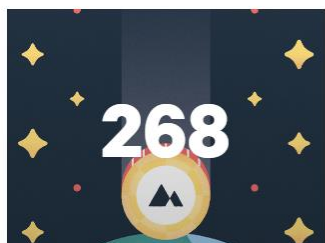
More than 1.2 million users visit our website annually.



More than 12,700 people attended RFF events in 2022.



In 2022, we wrote over 220 publications and commentaries.



268 foundations, corporations, and individuals support us.



Resources magazine has been published since 1959, with 211 issues to date.



We're home to 139 staff and affiliated scholars.



RFF was ranked #1 globally for environmental economics in 2022.

### Leadership and Governance

RFF's Leadership Team, Board of Directors, and President's Council consist of experts, professionals, and leaders in a wide array of disciplines, including environmental and energy economics, policy, business, and finance.

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## *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

RFF is committed to being a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. Working to achieve this goal is essential to achieving their mission. It strengthens the organization, allows them to reach a broader audience, and positively impacts the greater community. Their position as a source of high-quality, innovative research and policy engagement relies on a skilled, diverse workforce and an inclusive, respectful environment.

## *Commitment to Research Independence and Integrity*

RFF is committed to conducting impactful, impartial, and independent research and policy analysis. They do not advocate or lobby on behalf of their partners, collaborators, or supporters; design or execute their efforts to the exclusive benefit of specific entities; or allow undue outside influence to impact their work. All of RFF's research results are public. By supporting RFF, their funders demonstrate their shared acceptance and absolute commitment to preserving RFF's research independence and integrity.

## *History*

At the start of the 1950s, questions about the supply, accessibility, and adequacy of the nation's access to and use of its natural resources had moved to the forefront of public concern. In 1951, President Harry Truman established the Materials Policy Commission (also known as the Paley Commission, after Chairman William Paley) to study the country's natural resource needs. The report it produced recommended the formation of an independent organization to analyze the supply of the country's natural resources. Resources for the Future (RFF) was founded in 1952 as America's first think tank devoted exclusively to natural resource and environmental issues.

These were the times before the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Clean Air Act, or the first Earth Day, and the application of economic thinking to environmental problems was still in its infancy. In RFF's early years, it helped to develop new fields of study—environmental and natural resource economics—along with economic tools and methods that would shape generations of environmental research. From the start, RFF's work applied economic thinking to practical problems: water pollution in American rivers, air pollution in its cities, and the management of scarce resources, including energy, minerals, forests, and other lands. RFF led the way in developing the techniques needed to quantify and compare the impacts of different policy interventions.

Around the same time, a set of ideas evolved at RFF on the use of incentive-based policies to combat pollution. By the 1970s, RFF was showing how this thinking could be applied in myriad ways, even to the allocation of the electromagnetic spectrum—research that anticipated the later auctioning of broadcast frequencies by two decades. Into the 1980s and to this day, RFF led pathbreaking analyses to define energy policy options that more fully account for economic and environmental constraints and consequences. By the early 1990s, this novel, incentive-based policy thinking paved the way for the historic Acid Rain Program, which RFF played a crucial role in modeling. The program led to substantial improvements in the health of communities and ecosystems and is now regarded as a major environmental success story.

In recent years, RFF has continued its legacy of groundbreaking research and policy innovation. When a group of northeastern states set out to establish the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative—the first mandatory market-based greenhouse gas emissions program in the United States—they turned to RFF as a key research partner. RFF's modeling of climate legislation for senators, governors, and others has helped to shed light on well-designed policy and how its impacts vary across society. RFF has also stewarded international efforts to improve estimates for the social cost of carbon—research that is crucial in accounting for the impacts of climate change in both the public and private sectors.

Additionally, RFF has embarked on new global research collaborations to leverage the best talent available to take on the climate challenge. RFF is crafting breakthrough policy solutions with climate scientists at the RFF-CMCC European

Institute on Economics and the Environment, and is spearheading a Global Climate Policy Partnership to support climate decisionmakers around the world. Both internationally and domestically, RFF is achieving the greatest impact by focusing on two interconnected priorities: designing net-zero emissions strategies and reducing risk while building resilient communities.

## The Opportunity

After seven successful years at RFF, current RFF President & CEO Dr. Richard Newell has decided to transition to a new position outside of RFF in 2024. RFF meets this moment from a position of strength with a talented team, exceptional Board of Directors, a solid balance sheet, and 70-year legacy of nonpartisan, impartial, and rigorous research and impact.

RFF is well positioned for a new President and CEO (CEO) to lead it to its next level of impact and growth. The new CEO will have the opportunity to build on this strong foundation and apply their experience and vision to expand the result of RFF's efforts.

## The Role

The President & CEO serves as the principal executive officer of the organization and is responsible to the Board for the fundraising, program direction, and operation of the organization. The President is selected and appointed by the Board. This position is located in Washington, DC.

The direct reports to the CEO are currently:

- VP, Research and Policy Engagement
- VP, Communications
- VP, Development
- VP, Finance and Administration
- Chief of Staff

Among the key responsibilities for this position, we would highlight the following:

- Provide leadership to the staff around prioritizing, implementing, and enhancing its research, and program resources to **increase the influence** of the organization and its researchers' work across a broad constituency.
- Bring leadership and a sophisticated understanding of **fundraising** with a variety of donors.
- Enable the organization to attract, develop, and retain **outstanding talent**, while planning for succession of key positions. Nurture and continue to enhance RFF's positive and empathetic internal culture.
- Deepen RFF's commitment and track record in advancing **diversity, equity, and inclusion**, continually setting and operationalizing explicit, specific, and achievable goals; adopting timelines and deadlines; monitoring RFF's progress; and using RFF's position to support improved DEI outcomes in the field.
- Demonstrate strong **intellectual leadership** and foster an **entrepreneurial** environment of creativity and innovation.
- **Communicate** the work and mission of RFF and increase RFF's visibility to a broad constituent base, including policy leaders, government decision-makers, academia, relevant businesses, the media and the interested public.
- **Increase the visibility** of RFF and the critical need to address climate and energy policy issues with a range of constituencies including government, academia, business and civic leadership, the media, and the interested public.

- **Convene** leaders from across the fields of economics, policy-relevant research and analysis, and policy making in climate, energy, and related areas to exchange best practices and areas for impact above the partisan debate. Position RFF as a thought leader on the domestic and international stage.
- Lead implementation of RFF's **strategic framework** and associated **goals, objectives, and key results**, while further defining and charting the path forward for RFF in partnership with the Board of Directors.
- Ensure that all activities and programs meet the highest standards of **ethics and transparency**.

## Candidate Profile

The ideal CEO will be a visionary leader with intellectual breadth, fundraising prowess, demonstrated operational skill and management savvy, broad consensus-building ability, and a sophisticated understanding of a range of environmental, energy, and climate policy issues within the academic, government, and private sectors.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies and experiences required for the position, we would highlight the following:

### Setting Strategy and Executing for Results

- The ability to define, communicate and align others to an inspiring vision for the organization.
- The ability to develop tactics for research distribution and impact, curate new ideas, and foster strong internal and external relationships to execute accordingly.
- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will stretch the organization and amplify its researchers' impacts within the sector.
- A leader who is viewed by others as having a high degree of integrity and forethought in their approach to making decisions; the ability to act in a transparent and consistent manner while always taking into account what is best for the organization and mission.

### Communications and Convening Power

- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- Ability to develop positive and productive relationships, effectively build working coalitions and consensus, and engage people and institutions towards achieving RFF's goals.
- An ability to inspire trust and followership through compelling influences, passion in their beliefs, unquestioned integrity and active drive.
- Encourages others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team.
- Ability to interface credibly and articulately with leading policymakers, researchers, corporate and NGO leaders, and other key stakeholder groups.

### Fundraising:

- Track record of and/or enthusiastic and demonstrated capacity to raise the financial resources to invest in intellectual capital and innovative programming by effectively demonstrating the value of RFF's work.
- Bring energetic ability to tell RFF's story to new audiences and convert them into new RFF supporters.

### Commitment to Research, Policy Engagement, and Storytelling

- Understand and appreciate the value of independent rigorous research and analysis in shaping and improving public policy and successful communication strategies for impact.

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- Bring a record of published academic research and/or demonstrated capacity to understand, appreciate, and externally represent such research and its importance to stakeholders, thereby enabling the organization to be viewed as a thought leader and partner with policy practitioners, funders, research leaders, and the public.
- Experience working in the highest levels of policy making.
- Demonstrated experience in the application and advancement of research to help design and evaluate public policy, consistent with the organization's longstanding and worldwide reputation for nonpartisan independence.

## **Demonstrated Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

- Demonstrated track record of personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Experience translating an organization's values into specific strategies and actions for both its external programmatic work and internal organizational work, including advancing and sustaining an organizational culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Experience leading a diverse staff focused on varying subject matter and who hold variety of skills and expertise.

## **Leading Teams**

- Demonstrate the "partner-like" leadership necessary to be effective in an organization of highly motivated professionals with a diverse set of skills and perspectives
- Bring an ability to attract top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, manage performance, and build succession pipelines for key positions.
- Embody a self-reflective leadership style; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and self-improvement.

## **Above Partisanship**

- Bring a demonstrated and unwavering commitment to rigorous, fact-based research and policy analysis.
- Politically astute with the ability to think through issues on the merits, above partisanship.

## **Contact**

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search. Prospective candidates are invited to send their CV and a cover letter to [RFFCEO@RussellReynolds.com](mailto:RFFCEO@RussellReynolds.com). All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.