About Sightline Institute

Founded in 1993, Sightline Institute is committed to making our region—stretching from Alaska to northern California and from the Pacific to the Rocky Mountain states—a global model of sustainability, with strong communities, a green economy, and a healthy environment. In programs on housing and urbanism, democracy, climate and energy, and farms and forests, we identify and promote reforms that yield outsized improvements for the region’s people and nature.

A nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research center, Sightline provides research reports, articles, and commentary; books, maps, graphics, and tools; framing and messaging guidance; and a daily news digest. We advise, inform, and advocate to public officials, change makers, and the media, and we collaborate with diverse allies and unconventional coalitions in pursuit of our mission. Sightline is among the largest and best-known public policy think tanks in the region. Learn more at www.sightline.org.

Opportunity for Impact

Sightline seeks a full-time Research Associate to join its Democracy and Housing & Urbanism teams in Alaska. The research associate would be part of both programs.
Our Democracy program works through our civic institutions to confront the challenges of climate change, housing shortages, and inequality. We need a democracy that represents all of us and that all of us can believe in. Yet, at this crucial moment, our democratic institutions are showing their cracks and flaws. We are working to mend those cracks and reform those flaws through work on three fronts: ensuring every citizen can exercise their right to vote, giving everyone a voice in elections, and seeking equal representation for all. Examples of our work in Alaska include the following:

- Playing a key role in the passage of important election reforms by helping the public better understand the potential benefits of an open primary and ranked choice voting on the state’s gridlocked politics.
- Envisioning a policy roadmap for state lawmakers that would make voting easier and more secure.

Our Housing & Urbanism program focuses on Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city, and works to create housing abundance as a solution to multiple pressing challenges: affordability, racial equity, climate change, and sustainability. In partnership with our colleagues in other cities, we develop and drive pro-housing policy in Anchorage, with the core goals of lifting exclusionary zoning rules that limit affordable home choices, promoting policies that increase the supply of housing at all levels, and bringing down the cost of living in opportunity-dense cities and towns. We work to loosen restrictions on homebuilding that segregate neighborhoods, push lower-income people out—forcing burdensome, polluting commutes—and prevent cities from welcoming new residents. Examples of the work you’d be part of in Alaska include the following:

- Proposing reforms that would make it easier and less costly to build accessory dwelling units (also known as backyard cottages or mother-in-law apartments).
- Testifying in support of other municipal code reforms that would make “missing middle” housing easier to build.
- Identifying policies that will lead to a more livable, walkable downtown Anchorage and working with allies to make those policies a reality.

Overview

The Research Associate reports to Sightline’s Alaska Lead and works closely with communications staff. They conduct research and analysis in support of writing articles and reports, public speaking, advocacy, and other activities. They will eventually develop into co-authoring or authoring articles, representing Sightline in communications with allies or decision makers, and communicating with our audiences to advance Sightline’s mission.

Primary Responsibilities

Research, Writing, and Outreach

Conduct research as directed by the Alaska Lead. You may also conduct outreach under the guidance of more senior Communications staff members. This might include:
• Delving into an assigned topic and delivering a scrupulously accurate and thoroughly documented write-up on the subject and/or a spreadsheet and/or other research products;
• Helping to finalize articles, newsletters, or graphics for publication;
• Preparing PowerPoint presentations and speaking notes for your supervisors' public appearances;
• Creating charts and graphs for publication and presentations;
• Helping coordinate outreach lists with Sightline's communications staff;
• Coordinating with graphic designers and research specialists to develop supporting charts, maps, and other supplementary pieces;
• Undertaking special projects, from photo editing to video production to investigative reporting, as suits your skills and Sightline's needs; and
• Exemplifying the attention to detail, accuracy, and compelling storytelling that have established Sightline's reputation.
• Advocate for recommendations emerging from research, in coordination with other team members, including strategizing, lobbying, and preparing or advising on legislation
• Develop skills to speak to reporters on the record, conduct radio and on-screen interviews, meet with donors, and give public speeches and presentations

Professional Development
Sightline is committed to professional development and often promotes researchers from within, so Research Associates begin to develop their own expertise and grow into helping write and publish articles, eventually under their own names. In time and as possible, they may also make public presentations, under the direction of senior staff, and may represent the organization at meetings, events, and other gatherings. They may speak on Sightline's behalf with the media.

The Ideal Candidate
• 1-3 years of relevant research or analytical experience.
• INSATIABLE CURIOSITY. You love to learn more, dig deeper, overturn every rock until you figure out how things really work.
• WRITER. You are always striving to get better at communicating complex ideas in a way that helps readers understand.
• ANALYST. You get excited about data and spreadsheets.
• COMMUNICATOR. In addition to honing your skills communicating to readers, you are also comfortable communicating with co-workers.
• FLEXIBLE. You relish examining problems from different angles, taking in new information, changing your mind.
• TEAM PLAYER. You enjoy jumping in where needed.
• Comfortable communicating about what you’re working on, where you’re stuck, when you need guidance, when you don’t understand or don’t agree with the direction of a project.
• METICULOUS. We are a policy think tank. We get the facts right or we lose credibility. Like us, you hate typos (they happen to everybody) and strive to make sure you understand the big picture context and get the details right.
• BELIEVE IN OUR MISSION. You are committed to making our institutions of democracy fairly representative so that, together, we can pass the policies that will create strong communities, a green economy, and a healthy environment.
• EQUITY. You center equity and inclusion in your work, always striving to conduct culturally relevant research, write with a variety of audiences in mind and generally bring an equity lens to everything you do.
• RESPECTFUL AND OPEN. You treat all fellow staff members, interns, and volunteers with integrity and goodwill and without prejudice in regard to race, religion, ethnicity, disability, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other personal attributes irrelevant to job performance.

Flexibility:
We most likely will hire a candidate who is at the “Associate” level of skill and experience, as just described. We are, however, flexible and will consider candidates who are more experienced and skilled, at Sightline’s “Senior Associate” level. Candidates with 3-7 years of experience would qualify for the Senior Associate level and duties, expectations, and compensation would ramp up to adjust for experience level. We look for the overall promise of the candidate to contribute to our mission over the long term.

Compensation and Benefits
The salary range is $40,000-54,000 (plus 10 percent retirement, as noted below). Sightline is committed to ushering team members along its career track of learning, mentoring, and advancement. Employees can earn annual merit raises and periodic promotions.

We offer a robust package of benefits including a 401(k) plan with an employer contribution of 10 percent of salary. (This is added to—not subtracted from—pay. That means a $50,000 salary at Sightline is equivalent to a $55,000 salary at an organization that makes no employer contribution to retirement.) Benefits also include full medical and dental insurance for the employee and partial coverage for dependents; four weeks of paid vacation, ten paid holidays, and two weeks of paid sick leave per year; and a three-month paid sabbatical leave every seven years. Sightline’s staff members work hard but enjoy balanced lives and a collegial organizational culture.

Location
This position is based in Alaska, preferably in Anchorage. Candidates willing to relocate from elsewhere are welcome to apply, although we are inclined to hire candidates who have roots in the state. This position is remote, and Sightline is a virtual-first organization. We have an office in Seattle, but most staff members work remotely from their homes and other spaces.

To Apply

Please send a resume and cover letter detailing your interest in the role and how your skills translate to the position and a writing sample (of which you are sole author and that is similar to Sightline's published works in its style and form of argument) to jobs@sightline.org. (For models of comparable work, you might review articles published by current researchers on Sightline's staff: here and here.) We prefer all application materials be assembled in a single PDF and labeled with the applicant’s name. Please also tell us in your email where you found this position; this information helps us streamline our recruiting processes.

The application deadline is April 8, 2022, and applications received by that date will be given priority, but we will accept applications until the position is filled. First round Zoom interviews will take place through April 15. Second round Zoom interviews will take place through the end of April. We will likely invite finalists to complete a work assignment that is designed to test their skills in the specific functions required for the position. We anticipate extending an offer by mid-May.

_Sightline Institute is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified candidates are encouraged to apply. Applicants will not be discriminated against because of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, religion, national origin, citizenship status, disability, ancestry, marital status, veteran status, medical condition or any protected category prohibited by local, state or federal laws._