

MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION



Program Officers, Midwest Climate & Energy

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About the McKnight Foundation

The McKnight Foundation is a fourth-generation family foundation established by William L. McKnight and his wife, Maude L. McKnight, in 1953. As an early leader of 3M, Mr. McKnight earned a reputation for spurring innovation and recognizing the creative potential in others—practices that live on at the Foundation and reflect in its [core values](#).

Driven by its mission to advance a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive, McKnight works across many disciplines, sectors, and geographic boundaries. Its diverse programs are united in a quest to improve our shared fate. The Foundation envisions a world that recognizes the dignity of every human being, a world where we celebrate the creativity of the arts and sciences and come together to protect our one and only Earth.

A philanthropic leader based in Minneapolis, McKnight works in partnership with communities across Minnesota, the Midwest, and internationally. It approaches complex challenges with curiosity and is willing to take bold steps to achieve impact. The Foundation brings a diverse set of tools and resources to meet its mission, including grantmaking, investments, collaboration, policy reform, research, and strategic communications.

Learn more about [McKnight](#).





About the Midwest Climate & Energy Program

In 2019, McKnight's board of directors approved a new mission statement, a new [Strategic Framework](#), and several shifts in programmatic investments. These efforts included a significant expansion of its [Midwest Climate & Energy Program](#) (MC&E), which is on track to double from \$16 million in annual grants in 2020 to \$32 million by 2022, reflecting the urgency of the climate crisis and a high priority for the board.

The expanded MC&E program goal is to ***take bold action on the climate crisis by dramatically cutting carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030***. Achieving this ambitious goal at the necessary speed and scale also requires a [healthy democracy](#), grounded in racial and economic justice, one in which all people have the voice and power to bring about change to the issues affecting their lives and livelihoods. The MC&E team will pursue this strategy in close partnership with McKnight's [Vibrant & Equitable Communities](#) program, which supports communities in building powerful multiracial movements for change.

The MC&E program envisions a thriving, carbon-neutral Midwestern economy by transforming the energy system through clean power, electrifying transportation and buildings, sequestering carbon on working lands, and strengthening democratic participation. Anchored in McKnight's core values, the work engages approaches, policies, and processes that empower community voices, mobilize collective action, and address racial equity within the context of climate solutions.



The Opportunity

The McKnight Foundation seeks two Program Officers to advance the work that will bring MC&E's ambitious goal to fruition. The new Program Officers will help shape and guide the trajectory of the Foundation's climate initiatives. These roles present exciting opportunities for thought leadership around philanthropic interventions, informed by a deep commitment to racial equity, to support and accelerate innovations and strategies to dramatically cut carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030.

Reporting to the Program Director of Midwest Climate & Energy, the Program Officers will oversee and build significant grant portfolios and partnerships with intermediary funders and actively collaborate with McKnight's Impact Investing team and Vibrant & Equitable Communities program team. The MC&E program uses its philanthropic funding to support efforts that build power through partnership, aligning climate and equity goals to advance bold action on the climate crisis.

Key Priorities and Responsibilities

Strategic Implementation

- Manage a portfolio of grants that support transforming the energy system, electrifying transportation and buildings, and sequestering carbon on working lands in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.
- Develop and maintain relationships with existing grantees and new prospects to learn from current work, explore emerging opportunities, and build new concepts.
- Actively engage with McKnight colleagues in Impact Investing and the board's Mission Investment Committee to identify and analyze mission and program related investments that advance program goals.

External Partnerships

- Manage key partnerships with funding intermediaries and oversee new and expanded investments in and through these partners.
- Convene and collaborate with advocacy organizations (including, but not limited to, those focused on climate justice, environmental protection, democratic participation, and clean energy), foundations, academic institutions, regulators, and policymakers to support cross-sector collaborations that reinforce program goals.
- Serve as a representative of the Foundation in communities of learning and practice, helping to shape the field's response to and support of carbon reduction.

Thought Leadership and Advocacy

- Represent the Foundation and the MC&E program to external audiences and provide leadership in our efforts to achieve economy-wide greenhouse gas emission reductions while advancing a commitment to racial equity.
- Serve as a resource on technical and policy issues relating to energy transformation. Track market and political trends to identify high-leverage opportunities for philanthropic intervention.
- Stand as a trusted voice on the interdependence of climate and racial and economic justice.





Ideal Candidate

McKnight seeks individuals who demonstrate an unwavering passion for and commitment to solving the climate crisis and addressing racial equity within the context of climate solutions. The Program Officers possess analytical skills and an ability to influence change in highly nuanced contexts. Highly desired are deeply curious and credible climate generalists who bring to the team either technical and policy knowledge of our decarbonization focus or experience in movement-building in climate.

The Program Officers lead with a strategic mindset and bring a proven ability to identify and translate strategic opportunities into tangible action and outcomes. Strong listening and synthesizing skills are essential, along with the talent and desire to capture, distill, and share what is important, why it matters, and how it relates to the overall strategy. The successful candidate organizes, prioritizes, and switches from strategy development to daily execution with ease, consistently achieving results.

A capacity to navigate the complexity of diverse environments and stakeholder groups, seeking to understand and driving towards common goals from, at times, competing perspectives, is essential in these roles. A high level of emotional intelligence and the ability to be versatile and diplomatic is vital. Leading with a sense of humility and intellectual curiosity, candidates display a genuine desire to listen to and learn from others. They will operate from respect for the organization's grantees and help create an environment of continuous learning with partner organizations and sector experts.





Ideal Candidate continued

The Program Officers are naturally curious, lifelong learners who are comfortable reaching beyond current areas of expertise. They have the intellectual agility to become knowledgeable across all aspects of our climate work, including scientific, technical, policy, and racial justice, quickly seeing connections, opportunities, and intersections. The ideal candidates' innate interest in this work fuels a proactive and forward-looking approach, following trends and anticipating changes and potential impacts to the Foundation.

With exceptional oral and written communication skills, the Program Officers mount persuasive arguments and effectively present new and complex ideas to audiences of varying backgrounds, from community members to elected officials. With strong interpersonal skills and an approachable style, the Program Officers are team players, empathetic listeners, and natural collaborators who build strong relationships inside and outside the Foundation.

The Program Officers are confident and mature professionals who routinely exhibit sound judgment and a high degree of discretion and tact. The preferred candidates are humble with the self-awareness and comfort to set ego and personal ambition aside and focus on the mission and team. We expect a high degree of self-awareness and the ability to organize, prioritize, and meet deadlines in a fast-paced environment with multiple and competing demands. Candidates should demonstrate tolerance for ambiguity, with the ability to work independently yet seek input as needed.

Upbeat bridge-builders, the successful candidates foster a positive, professional atmosphere and connect across issues and functions, actively developing trusting relationships up, down, and across the organization. Cultural sensitivity and cultural competence are essential to success. The ideal candidates are personally devoted to growing their cultural competence, actively participating in the Foundation's effort to integrate justice and equity into all facets of its work.



Qualifications

Candidates must have a minimum of five years of experience in climate and energy issues on a local or national level; previous philanthropy experience is not required. Because the Foundation is filling two Program Officer roles simultaneously, a diverse set of experiences will be considered with the goal of identifying Program Officers with complementary skills.

McKnight focuses on transforming the energy system, electrifying transportation and buildings, and sequestering carbon on working lands in the Midwest. Candidates who have direct work experience on carbon reduction—generally or specifically—in these areas are of great interest. So, too, are candidates who have developed their expertise at the intersection of climate and equity, whether in movement building, running campaigns, grassroots organizing, or related activities.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values at McKnight and integral to how the staff and board approach their work. Fundamental to the MC&E program goal is a belief that structural racism is a barrier to carbon reduction. Candidates must bring lived experience or a demonstrated commitment to addressing climate and energy through a racial equity lens.

Much of McKnight's climate and energy work is place-based, focusing on Minnesota and the six states that comprise the Upper Midwest. Preference will be given to candidates with knowledge of or personal ties to the region and its people. The positions are based in Minneapolis, MN.

The salary range for the Program Officer positions is \$106,000-\$112,000.

To Be Considered

The McKnight Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and proudly values diversity. We encourage candidates of all backgrounds to apply.

Please submit your resume and cover letter expressing your interest in the position and fit for the role via [Waldron's Candidate Portal](#). Letters may be addressed to Sarah Meyer.

*The search for the next Program Officers, Midwest Climate & Energy
is being assisted by a team from Waldron:*

Sarah Meyer
Vice President

Direct: 206.792.4221

sarahmeyer@waldronhr.com

Mollie Smith
Search Associate

Direct: 206.462.6190

mollie@waldronhr.com





Waldron Search is honored to work with the McKnight Foundation in the search for two Program Officers, Midwest Climate & Energy. We believe in and support the work of the McKnight Foundation, and we are doing our best to recruit two talented team members who will accelerate this mission. As the consulting partner strategic leaders choose to help attract, engage, and inspire effective leaders, our passion is helping people and organizations realize their full potential and increase their impact.