

Position -- President

Organization -- McKnight Foundation

Location -- Minneapolis, MN

Reporting Relationship -- The President reports to the Board of Directors

Website -- <https://www.mcknight.org/>

THE OPPORTUNITY

The McKnight Foundation is a fourth-generation family foundation that was 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. Their daughter, Virginia McKnight Binger, then set the standard for the Foundation’s work with her singular compassion and spirit of generosity.

Today, the McKnight Foundation works across many disciplines, sectors, and geographic boundaries. McKnight’s work supports communities in its home state of Minnesota and beyond, spanning several continents. 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.

In 2019, the Board of Directors approved a new mission statement, a new [Strategic Framework](#), and several shifts in programmatic investments. This included the sunseting of a few programs, the expansion of its Midwest Climate & Energy program, and the creation of a new program dedicated to creating an equitable and inclusive Minnesota.

McKnight is a valued philanthropist and community leader in its home state, in the broader Midwest, the nation, and internationally. Leveraging the organization’s track record, its ability to work in partnerships, and its willingness to experiment and explore, the Foundation sees many new impact and leadership opportunities ahead. Recognized for its pragmatism, McKnight aspires to make progress on several complex, ambitious challenges facing us today, the coming decade, and beyond.

This is an exciting opportunity for a dynamic and innovative leader to build on the strength of an enduring legacy and long-standing program commitments to carry the Foundation forward. In the face of a rapidly changing environment that requires nimbleness and adaptability, the next President will foster innovation and thoughtfully manage the organization’s evolution and its pursuit of equity, as exhibited in internal policies, practices and culture, as well as in the broader society.

The Foundation’s next leader will be passionately committed to racial equity and inclusiveness, will embrace diversity as an asset to be leveraged, and will be able to work effectively across differences in viewpoints from multiple constituents. The Foundation’s President will engage a holistic systems perspective, recognizing that local efforts can have a global impact. The President will demonstrate authentic engagement, embody an inspirational

leadership style, and understand how to balance the complexity of working within a sophisticated organization going through significant change, a family foundation, and a community setting.

McKnight's President will demonstrate agility and the ability to navigate change, both in implementing the organization's strategic mission, and in response to dramatic shifts in our external environment, such as the coronavirus pandemic. The leader will bring a fresh perspective to re-energize organizational culture, inspire the board and staff, and bring them together to advance the critical and compelling work of the Foundation.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The McKnight Foundation, an internationally recognized family foundation based in Minnesota, advances a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive. Established in 1953 by William and Maude McKnight, this fourth-generation family foundation is deeply committed to advancing climate solutions in the Midwest; building an equitable and inclusive Minnesota; and supporting the arts in Minnesota; neuroscience; and international crop research. The Foundation had approximately \$2.4 billion in assets at the end of 2019 and on average grants about \$90 million a year.

Among the 50 largest US foundations, McKnight has been recognized as the most committed impact investor by the Chronicle of Philanthropy. Approximately one out of every three dollars invested is aligned with McKnight's mission. With this 21st-century investing approach, McKnight amplifies philanthropic impact and stewards the endowment in ways that generate financial return, meets fiduciary duty, and drives program learning, all while advancing the mission around environmental and social impact.

The Foundation acts as a funder, convener, thought leader, and as an employer, economic entity, and institutional investor, using all of its roles and resources to realize its mission. The Foundation's governing board includes actively engaged fourth-generation members of the McKnight family, with soon to be fifth-generation involvement during the next leader's tenure, as well as community members who bring diverse perspectives.

Living by values of stewardship, equity, respect, and curiosity, McKnight has earned national recognition for fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, transparency, and inclusiveness that empowers its diverse teams to achieve its shared mission. McKnight aspires toward a high-trust, high-performing culture that encourages continuous learning and improvement across its program areas.

***MISSION:** The McKnight Foundation, a family foundation based in Minnesota, advances a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive.*

***VISION:** We envision 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.*

CORE VALUES: Stewardship, Respect, Equity, and Curiosity

STRATEGIC DIRECTION:

To realize a future where people and planet thrive, McKnight is increasing its investments in two areas: advancing climate solutions in the Midwest and building a more equitable and inclusive Minnesota.

McKnight envisions a future where Minnesotans of color and Indigenous Minnesotans—who must navigate institutional and systemic barriers—gain and exercise power, prosper culturally and economically, and participate fully in civic life. In the still developing Vibrant & Equitable Communities program, the Foundation envisions a state that works for all its residents—harnessing the potential of Minnesotans across race, culture, ethnicity, income, geography, and other differences.

On climate, the science tells us we have only a little more than a decade to prevent massive human suffering and severe social and economic disruption. Through the Foundation’s work to date, McKnight knows that reducing carbon pollution improves health, creates clean energy jobs, and boosts the economy. The Foundation also knows that the Midwest is the sixth largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions in the world—and if the world is to stave off the worst consequences of climate change, the Midwest needs to do its part in accelerating climate action.

The Foundation sees racial inequity and the climate crisis as among the greatest challenges of our generation, which compels McKnight to address them with the urgency and resources they warrant, and with the abundance of imagination and fortitude they require. We will need strong civic engagement and a functioning democracy if we are to meet all of the Foundation’s program goals.

PROGRAMS:

Vibrant & Equitable Communities: The Vibrant & Equitable Communities program works towards advancing a more equitable and inclusive Minnesota, focusing on economic mobility, equitable development, and civic engagement. Its goal is: Build a vibrant future for all Minnesotans with shared power, prosperity, and participation. The three focus areas intersect with one another, and they also have distinct goals. Economic mobility aims to help individuals thrive by closing racial gaps in education, employment, income, and wealth. Equitable development seeks to strengthen communities and places by expanding the capacity of local leaders and residents to drive resources toward improving their quality of life. Civic engagement aims to inspire advocacy and engagement by building local political capital, leveraging diversity as an asset, finding solutions together, and recognizing the agency of historically underrepresented groups and communities.

Midwest Climate & Energy: The Midwest Climate & Energy program envisions a thriving, carbon-neutral Midwestern economy by transforming the energy system – through clean power, electrification of transportations and buildings, and carbon sequestration. Its work engages the region’s public and private leaders, decision-makers, and residents in building low-carbon

communities and economies that are vibrant, equitable, and resilient. In September 2019, McKnight announced an expansion of this program and a new goal to take bold action on the climate crisis by dramatically cutting carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030.

Arts: McKnight believes that Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive. As creators, innovators, and leaders, Minnesota's working artists are the primary drivers of the state's heralded arts and culture community. The McKnight Foundation invests in the arts and other sectors to support Minnesota's working artists and advocates for the value of their work, which nurtures cultural identities, imagines solutions, and catalyzes social change.

International: The Collaborative Crop Research Program works on two continents to improve access to local, sustainable, nutritious food using collaborative research, adaptive learning and knowledge-sharing with smallholder farmers, research institutions, government, and development organizations.

Neuroscience: The McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience is an independent charitable organization established by the McKnight Foundation that works to bring science closer to the day when diseases of the brain and behavior can be accurately diagnosed, prevented, and treated.

THE POSITION:

The McKnight Foundation's Board of Directors is seeking a dynamic executive to build on the organization's legacy and lead the organization through the next chapter. This individual will provide energy, vision, strategy, and management to drive future impact in the Foundation's core issue areas. This leader will live the values of the organization and inspire a culture of collaboration, inclusivity, and innovation.

The President will have overall accountability, responsibility, and authority for the philanthropic, operational and business affairs of the McKnight Foundation in accordance with the respective Strategic Framework and the objectives adopted and approved by the Board. Essential to the McKnight Foundation is delivering value across the state of Minnesota and beyond.

Specific responsibilities include:

- **Mission Stewardship.** Work with the Board and staff to communicate the mission effectively within the Foundation and externally to ensure that it continues to inspire, and to guide in the execution of the Strategic Framework to keep advancing toward the mission. This includes the careful stewardship of the endowment and Foundation's role as an institutional investor.
- **Board Relations.** Work with the Board to help ensure that they are properly constituted, including working with the family to begin engaging the fifth generation, and have the resources and information necessary to conduct effective governance.
- **Values and Ethical Standards Management.** Work with the Board and staff to ensure adoption of, and adherence to, appropriate values and ethical standards in all McKnight Foundation business.

- Brand Identity and Voice. Work with the Board and staff to preserve strong reputational equity of the Foundation, making strategic decisions about the use of McKnight’s public voice and credible influence.

Management

The President will make decisions that result in the efficient and effective functioning of the Foundation.

- Staff Management: Will ensure that staff are recruited, supported, and guided, and that their professional development is nurtured; will inspire key talent and champion the continuing development of every team. Will promote a culture of impeccable integrity, high trust and excellence in performance, open and direct communication, meaningful collaboration and continuous improvement that values learning and commitment to quality.
- Financial Management: Will work with the Board and staff to develop endowment management and financial administration strategies and systems that are effective and aligned with the mission/values of the McKnight Foundation; and ensure that such strategies and systems are implemented well.
- Programmatic Management: Will work with the Board and staff to develop programming, grant-making and investment strategies (across the full continuum of capital – grants, PRIs and market-rate investments) as well as systems that are effective and aligned with the mission/values of the McKnight Foundation; and ensure that such strategies and systems are implemented well.
- Risk Management and Compliance: Will work with the Board and staff to ensure the Foundation develops prudent enterprise risk management strategies and compliance and accountability systems that are effective and aligned with the mission of the McKnight Foundation; and ensure that such strategies and systems are implemented well.
- Impact Evaluation Management: Will work with the Board and staff to establish standards and systems that track the effectiveness and impact of the McKnight Foundation, including consciously identifying learning objectives and intended outcomes, as well as incorporating feedback loops to promote continuous learning and to inform future strategy and tactics.

External Affairs

The President will serve as the Foundation’s official representative and primary external spokesperson within local, national and global settings. The President will bring McKnight’s perspective to public conversations about the future of our communities, and beyond, in areas where the Foundation has expertise. This includes engaging with public officials, business leaders, and other stakeholders to educate them about McKnight’s program goals and interests. The President will also work collaboratively with other private and/or public funders and grantees for greater social impact.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE/QUALIFICATIONS

Core competencies of a successful candidate include:

- Deep commitment to mission
- Highest integrity
- A track record of successful leadership of an organization or entity of similar size and complexity
- Management and culture building skills and experience. Proven experience in building and managing high-performing teams and empowering professionals and content experts with varied backgrounds and perspectives
- Champion and leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Strategic and creative thinking
- Strong operational business acumen, including an entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to philanthropic innovation
- A demonstrated commitment to accountability
- Strong external relationship building and communication skills

Additional ideal qualifications and characteristics will include:

- Experience working in, or a demonstrated commitment to, social impact investing
- Philanthropic and/or nonprofit leadership experience
- Strong knowledge base or expertise in one or more of the Foundation's issue areas
- Intellectual curiosity
- Capacity to see opportunity, potential for leverage, and impact
- Collaboration skills
- Discipline and drive
- Board and multi-stakeholder engagement skills
- Nimble
- Adept at managing within ambiguity
- Pragmatic, rather than dogmatic, in thinking about impact approaches

EDUCATION

An undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university is required. An advanced degree and/or pertinent experience is preferred.

TO APPLY

Please apply online, attaching a current resume and customized letter of interest. All interest and recommendations may also be sent directly to the Korn Ferry team at McKnightSearch@kornferry.com.