

# Program Guidelines: Mississippi River

## Inquiry Instructions

This document provides information to help determine if your organization fits within our Mississippi River program grantmaking guidelines, and to help you prepare to submit an initial inquiry.



## Application Overview

1. Read these guidelines and call us at 612-333-4220 to discuss your inquiry.
2. Familiarize yourself with our online application process at [www.mcknight.org/apply](http://www.mcknight.org/apply).
3. Visit the Mississippi River section of our website and follow the links to start a new application.



## Deadlines

Inquiries Received	Board Consideration
November 1	February
February 1	May
May 1	August
August 1	November

*NOTE: The online application system is accessible for two weeks prior to deadline. Board consideration is pending full proposal invitation.*



## Questions?

Please visit [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org) or call us at 612-333-4220.

## Program Goal

The goal of our Mississippi River program is to restore the water quality and resilience of the Mississippi River. To create an enabling environment of proven practices, new markets, and effective policies that influence decisions affecting the river at scale, we pursue two core strategies, described below. Our approach emphasizes:

- *Innovation*, to develop new solutions or accelerate adoption of existing, underutilized solutions.
- *Scale and scalability*, to achieve system-wide impacts.
- *Testing and learning*, to refine solutions over time.
- *Capacity building*, to enable advocates to develop and advance cutting-edge policy solutions.
- *Inclusion*, to ensure all river communities benefit from a high-quality, resilient river system regardless of geography, income, race, or ethnicity, and have opportunities to define what a resilient Mississippi River means to them.

## Program Strategies

1. **Restore functional hydrology** in the Mississippi River corridor. We focus primarily on efforts in the upper Mississippi and Louisiana's Mississippi Delta that:

- Protect and expand floodplains and wetlands.
- Reduce and manage agricultural drainage and increase the water storage capacity of the Midwest agricultural landscape.
- Protect and restore coastal wetlands in the Mississippi River delta.

In this work we emphasize approaches that:

- Foster innovative solutions to river and landscape engineering — and test, learn, and refine them over time.
- Prioritize non-structural, natural approaches to reduce flooding and

manage the river for multiple uses.

- Bring together conservation organizations with nontraditional allies to develop innovative solutions for restoring functional hydrology.
- Develop opportunities for enhancing economic and recreational benefits from wetlands and floodplains.
- Support civic engagement to build public awareness and support for improving the water quality and resilience of the Mississippi River system.

2. **Reduce agricultural pollution** in four states along the northern half of the river (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois). We focus on efforts that:

- Increase the sustainability of crop and livestock systems.
- Support the development and adoption of sustainable alternatives to conventional crop and livestock systems.

In this work we emphasize approaches that:

- Encourage new markets for sustainably produced products by catalyzing supply chain innovation and building demand through public awareness.
- Build corporate, community, and individual demand for clean water.
- Encourage adoption and implementation of policies that incentivize changes in farming systems by reducing risk and enhancing economic returns of sustainable practices.
- Build farmer knowledge, capacity, and cultural acceptance of sustainable agricultural practices and products.
- Broaden scope of allies to explore and develop innovative solutions to agricultural pollution.
- Leverage new technologies that encourage improved soil and water quality outcomes.
- Build public awareness of the relationship between agriculture and water, and encourage advocacy that protects water resources

# The McKnight Foundation

Founded in 1953 by William and Maude McKnight, the Minnesota-based family foundation had assets of approximately \$2.2 billion and granted about \$87 million in 2016. Program interests include regional economic and community development, Minnesota's arts and artists, education equity, youth engagement, Midwest climate and energy, Mississippi River water quality, neuroscience research, international crop research, and rural livelihoods.



## Mission

The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. We use all our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve.



## Contact

The McKnight Foundation  
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[www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org)  
@mcknightfdn  
/mcknightfdn

## How to Apply

The first step is calling us to discuss your inquiry. If your organization's work fits our funding strategies, you can familiarize yourself with our online grant application process at [www.mcknight.org/instructions](http://www.mcknight.org/instructions). When you're ready to submit an initial inquiry, visit the Mississippi River program area of our website and follow the links to start a new application.

We will respond via email within 45 days of receiving your inquiry, either to decline funding or to provide instructions to submit a full proposal online.

## Eligibility and Types of Support

We provide planning, operating, and project grants. With very few exceptions, to be eligible for a grant, applicants must be classified by the Internal Revenue Service as tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations. We discourage the use of fiscal agents. Units of government may apply for funding for special projects, although we will not fund activities that are traditionally the responsibility of government. We consider capital grants only in exceptional circumstances; please discuss any capital proposal with a program officer before submitting a written request. Among the criteria for capital funding, at least half the total project budget must be raised before applying, and McKnight funding must leverage other support for the project.

## What We Don't Fund

Foundations can be most effective by concentrating their resources in a few areas. This means we cannot support many worthy projects outside our program interests.

For example, we do not make grants for:

- advocacy efforts related to biofuels production (contact the Energy Foundation at [www.ef.org](http://www.ef.org));
- efforts broadly addressing endocrine disruptors;
- conventional water supply, wastewater treatment, stormwater conveyance, or flood control facilities;
- research in academic disciplines;
- scholarships or other types of assistance for individuals;
- conferences, including attendance or travel, except when related to existing McKnight support;
- endowments, except in rare cases;
- activities that have a specific religious purpose; or
- lobbying prohibited by the Internal Revenue Code (see note below).



## Questions?

Please visit [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org)  
or call us at 612-333-4220.

### Note on lobbying and public policy analysis

The Foundation may consider funding requests for efforts such as advocacy. However, as required by the Internal Revenue Code, the Foundation will not fund attempts to influence specific pending or proposed legislation, including referenda, local ordinances, and resolutions. For more information, visit our website at [www.mcknight.org/apply](http://www.mcknight.org/apply).

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Tell us what you think about our application process at [www.mcknight.org/survey](http://www.mcknight.org/survey).

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