

McKNIGHT FOUNDATION

Advancing a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive.

Program Director of Midwest Climate and Energy (MC&E)

Minneapolis, Minnesota

September 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [McKnight Foundation](#) (McKnight), an internationally recognized family foundation based in Minnesota, **envisions a world that recognizes the dignity of every human being, a world where we celebrate the creativity of the arts and sciences, and where we come together to protect our one and only earth.** The Foundation believes in taking a brutally realistic yet fiercely optimistic outlook in addressing the pressures that continually act on our social, political, and natural systems, through empowering people and communities to make positive change happen. McKnight's newly updated [Strategic Framework](#) grounds its mission, values and approach to philanthropy, even as the dynamism of the world requires perpetual adaptability and strategic agility.

The McKnight Foundation seeks nominations and applications for the position of **Program Director of Midwest Climate and Energy (MC&E)** to continue the momentum of the significantly expanded Midwest Climate & Energy program nurtured under its previous visionary leader.

Reporting to the Vice President of Programs, the new program director will join a passionate and highly experienced program leadership team at a critical moment in McKnight's history to help carry out the Foundation's commitment to taking bold action on the climate crisis. Along with McKnight's Senior Leadership Team, the MC&E program director will build upon learnings from the organization's long-standing work, while making space for new ideas. The program director will expand the program team's capacity and steward the execution of established strategies and guidelines to deepen the impact of the MC&E program. Reflecting McKnight's mission and values, the program director will serve as a thoughtful and active leader, as well as ambassador, for the Foundation, internally and externally. Leadership experience and emotional intelligence in collaborating with internal and external stakeholders are crucial, along with the ability to inspire and develop a high-performing team while building collaborative movement and synergy externally.

This search is being conducted by [NPAG](#). Application instructions can be found at the end of this document.

OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANIZATION AND MC&E PROGRAM

The McKnight Foundation is a fourth-generation family foundation that was established by William L. McKnight and his wife, Maude L. McKnight, in 1953. Today, McKnight works across many disciplines, sectors, and geographic boundaries. The Foundation supports communities in its home state of Minnesota and around the globe.

The McKnight Foundation's program areas include the following: Arts, International, Midwest Climate & Energy, Neuroscience, and Vibrant & Equitable Communities. The Foundation's approach includes: Adaptive Action, Strategic Systems Orientation, Placed-Based, Innovation, Credible Influence, Interdependence, Racial Equity, and Facts & Knowledge.

McKnight leverages a robust toolkit that includes grantmaking, collaboration, policy reform, research, strategic communications, and investments to realize its mission. McKnight's core values include Stewardship, Equity, Respect, and Curiosity. The Foundation uses all of its roles and resources to realize its mission. The Foundation acts as a funder, convener, thought leader, and as an employer, economic entity, and institutional investor.

The MC&E Program envisions a thriving, carbon-neutral Midwestern economy by transforming the energy system through clean power, electrification of transportations, decarbonization of buildings, and carbon sequestration. MC&E's work engages regional as well as national public and private leaders, decisionmakers, and residents in building low-carbon communities and economies that are vibrant, equitable, and resilient. In September 2019, McKnight announced an expansion of the program and a new goal to take bold action on the climate crisis by dramatically cutting carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030. Approved by the Board, the program's expanded focus now includes: 1) transforming the energy system; 2) electrifying transportation and buildings; 3) sequestering carbon on working lands; and 4) strengthening democratic participation. Anchored in McKnight's core values, the work is carried out through a racial equity lens – engaging approaches, policies, and processes that empower community voice, mobilize collective action, and address race equity within the context of climate solutions.

McKnight has earned national recognition for fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and inclusiveness that empowers its diverse teams to achieve the Foundation's shared mission. McKnight offers a high-trust, high-performing workplace culture that encourages continuous learning and improvement across a wide array of program interests.

McKnight is located near the Mississippi River in beautiful downtown Minneapolis, steps away from parks, bike paths, public transit, and a variety of restaurants. The greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area consistently ranks at the top in national comparisons on affordability and quality of life given its vibrant arts, food, and entertainment scene, plentiful green space, high civic engagement, strong economy, and increasing diversity of global cultures.

For more information about the McKnight Foundation, visit: <https://www.mcknight.org/>.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF MC&E

Reporting to the Vice President of Programs, the Midwest Climate & Energy (MC&E) Program Director will collaborate with the Vice President of Programs and other program directors to guide McKnight's effort to position the Midwest as a national and international leader in addressing climate change. The MC&E program aims to achieve economy-wide greenhouse gas emission reductions while advancing a commitment to racial equity.

The MC&E Program Director will support cross-programmatic work that supports the goals of the MC&E program and includes the management and implementation of a shared Minnesota civic engagement strategy with the Vibrant and Equitable Communities (V&EC) program. The scope of work will encompass developing a portfolio of grants to advance progress across the program's approved strategies, cultivating

and managing intermediary partners across the Upper Midwest, and designing and managing program learning and evaluation. Additionally, the Program Director will partner with the Impact Investing team to identify and analyze mission and program-related investments that advance program goals. The role will have direct supervision over two program officers. The MC&E team is additionally supported by a program officer shared with the V&EC program, a program grants associate, and a program teams administrator.

This leader will model the Foundation's [values](#), advance its [commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion \(DEI\)](#), and meaningfully contribute to building a culture of trust, transparency, respect, and results. The MC&E can expect to engage with the following opportunities for leadership:

Advancing and Executing a Robust Climate and Energy Strategic Vision

- Tap into the collective experience of the Foundation's leaders and staff members, and solicit input from external partners and stakeholders as needed to ensure an inclusive, comprehensive view.
- Provide expertise in climate and energy grantmaking and in leveraging and integrating philanthropic, public, and private investment. Maintain current information about local, regional, national, and international activities related to the Foundation's grantmaking interests in climate and energy, as well as areas of intersection between climate and energy and other McKnight programs. Foster working relationships among nonprofits, policy makers, funders, and others to strengthen the field and connect across other fields of work.
- Ensure that programs are aligned with the Foundation's mission and the program priorities established by the board. Model behavior that aligns grantmaking principles and practices with McKnight's values and represent the Foundation positively in the community. Develop learning and evaluation frameworks and tracking mechanisms to monitor the progress of grantee organizations and overall movement toward the goal and integrate knowledge from grantmaking experience back into program activities. Collaborate with the Impact Investment program staff and the Mission Investment Committee.
- Host convenings and meetings with grantees and the community at-large about MC&E program priorities. Make funding recommendations on grant requests from climate and energy organizations. Review letters of inquiry and grant requests from climate and energy organizations. Nurture positive relationships with key grantees. Review and approve all climate and energy grant recommendations.

Developing Integrated Program Implementation

- Supervise staff members and consultants working in the MC&E program, providing day-to-day management, development support, and other collegial support. Organize, prioritize, and participate in program-related workshops and meetings.
- Advise the President and Vice President of Programs on climate and energy related programs that are aligned with the board's priorities. Prepare MC&E program materials for the quarterly board book and provide updates at the quarterly board meeting. Support Foundation-wide communication about MC&E program activities, ways of working, and site visits.

- Develop and manage the MC&E program budget and payout schedules. Review and approve all MC&E grant payments. In partnership with the Director of Learning, assess effectiveness of program outputs through application of outside evaluations and internal monitoring of grantee effectiveness and progress toward program goals. Participate in cross-functional work groups as appropriate. Attend and actively participate in staff meetings, retreats, and Manager's Roundtable meetings. Manage Foundation programs, initiatives, and special projects.

Stewarding Culture and Organizational Change Management

- Model, through leadership and support, a culture in which all team members feel valued and recognized as vital to advancing the Foundation's mission and goals and are encouraged to grow professionally.
- In partnership with the President and Vice President of Programs, take a highly visible leadership role to offer an inclusive approach to preserving the collaborative and transparent culture of McKnight.
- Establish short- and long-term goals, develop strategies and plans, and facilitate change management activities to ensure organizational alignment with McKnight's strategic framework.
- Develop individuals and teams, manage work allocation, provide performance feedback and professional development, and support positive team dynamics. Display the skills, sensitivity, and personal confidence to tap into the power that each member of the team brings to the mission.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate will be deeply committed to McKnight's mission and understand the critical role that philanthropy plays in advancing social change. While no one person will embody all the qualities enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

- A minimum of 10 years of strategic leadership and career growth in climate change, social justice, or philanthropy at a similarly complex organization; five or more years of managerial experience; master's degree preferred.
- Experience in climate and energy issues on a local, regional, national, and international level along with strong professional networks within the climate and energy space.
- Demonstrated ability to source opportunities for high-leverage investments and the judgment and organizational savviness to assess the probability of success.
- Demonstrated track record of building strong relationships with allies and across lines of difference, implementing organizational improvements, and excellence in strategic, organizational, and budget management.
- Demonstrated body of work that reflects a commitment to organizational excellence and efficiency, servant leadership, management of collaboration and effective teamwork, and promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- Demonstrated cultural competency and emotional intelligence and communicate with candor and openness when addressing sensitive issues such as social justice, power dynamics, historical contexts, and racial inequities.
- Clear strategic and operational vision and exceptional skill in synthesizing information and translating vision into action steps for the long and short term.
- Demonstrated resourcefulness in setting priorities, navigating change management, and proposing new ways of achieving desired outcomes with inclusive approaches to planning, problem solving, and decision making.
- Combined experience, maturity level, and flexibility to interact with a broad set of stakeholders, including the board, senior level department heads, and staff members across the organization.
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills including the demonstrated ability to research, synthesize, and analyze information, compose documents, and present data in a clear and concise manner to appropriate personnel, including top management, program staff members, and the board.
- Highly developed facilitation, coaching, and engagement skills; comfort with managing diverse group dynamics and leading toward common desired outcomes.
- Highly developed emotional intelligence and demonstrated ability to use interpersonal skills and political acumen in respectful, collaborative, and diplomatic ways.
- A strong, intuitive communicator, skillful at managing through influence; demonstrated ability to connect and inspire across stakeholder groups.
- Passion for the mission-driven sector and the role philanthropy can have in addressing some of society's most challenging problems.
- Experience with nonprofits, foundations, and working directly with a family foundation board of directors is a plus.

TO APPLY

[Apply here](#). Due to the pace of this search, candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

This search is being conducted with assistance from Linh Nguyen, Allison Kupfer Poteet, and Paola Peacock of [NPAG](#). All inquiries should be directed to McKnight-MCE@nonprofitprofessionals.com

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